

HARAMBEE INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday January 29th 2025

The meeting of the Board of Trustees Public Meeting was held on Wednesday, January 29th at 6:37p.m.

Open Session

Meeting Called to Order

Board Chairman Maurice Baynard called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

Board Members Present:

Maurice Baynard
Jan Gillespie- Walton
Renee Whitby
Charis Jackson
Heloise Jettison
C. Wade Mosely
Donna Holmes Lockett
Larry Bell

Board Members Absent:

Shawn Blue

Others Present:

Gregory Shannon	CEO
Danielle Bryant	Compliance Officer
Nakia Brown	Chief Academic Officer
David Rosario	Chief of Operations and Administration
Deleah Archer	Chief of Student Support & Innovation
Michelle Thornton	CFO
Jenita Lunsford	Board Liaison

Libation (Board member Renee Whitby)

Libation was lead by Board member and cultural leader Renee Whitby

Introduction of Visitors and Others Present

None

Roll Call

Board Chairman Maurice Baynard asked Board members and the senior leadership team to give introductions. Board members and the senior leadership team introduced themselves, stated their names and titles.

Review and approval of the December 18th 2024 Board Meeting Minutes

Dr. Baynard asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the Board Meeting Minutes from the December 18th meeting. He opened the floor to Board members for comments. There were no corrections or additions. Board member Wade made a motion seconded by Board member Renee to accept the minutes as presented. All were in favor, none were opposed and there was a unanimous motion to accept the minutes as presented.

Approval: 8 **AYE:** 0 **Nays:** 0 **Abstentions:** 0 **Absent:** 1

Board Chairman Maurice Baynard turned the meeting over to Greg for the CEO report. Greg began with reciting the Mission, Vision and Core Values of the organization.

Harambee Institute exists to offer our community an education with a focus on the origins, current status, and future of the African world.

Our mission is to educate students to succeed as global citizens with a clear awareness of "who I am, where I am from, where I am going, and how I get there."

Our vision is a collective and informed African American community utilizing science and technology as a means of promoting education for self-reliance, locally and globally.

Our core values are:

Greatness: Pursuit of excellence in all we do

Accountability: Owning what we do and who we are

Innovation: Open to new ideas with a growth mindset

Integrity: Honesty, transparency, and unity in all we do

CEO Report, Greg Shannon

Mid Year Appraisals

Greg reported that mid year performance appraisals are scheduled for February 2025. He indicated that every staff member from the executive leaders through the instructional team would receive their mid year appraisals during the month of February and all would be completed by February 14th. Everyone is rated annually and they meet with them mid year to give them an idea of their assessment and their job performance.

Organizational Planning and Development 2025-2026

Greg reported that they are in the midst of planning their budget for the 2025-2026 school year. They have a date in February where each executive leader will meet with Michelle and Greg to discuss their upcoming plans in their individual departments and how those plans relate to their departmental budgets.

Fundraising and Development

Greg reported that they continue to fundraise and gave thanks to those that contributed to the National Junior Honor Society. He said that The Ruby Bridges Chapter would be going this Friday to the National Convention in Chicago Illinois. He said that eight students along with four chaperones will travel to Chicago this weekend to attend the convention.

School Lottery 2025-2026

Greg reported that they facilitated their school lottery last week and he gave thanks to Shakira and David for their participation. He said that parents have a 30-day process to complete their enrollment packet. Greg concluded his report and opened the floor for questions. He turned the meeting over to Nakia for her report on Instruction Curriculum and Assessment.

Instruction Curriculum and Assessment, Nakia Brown

Instruction

Student Novel Orders

Nakia reported that they are increasing their novel studies aimed at improving reading comprehension across all grade levels. She said that they have ordered additional novel's to respond to their students need to increase reading comprehension. They are continuing the protocol of reading a novel per month. She said that the students are participating in small group study, novel study and literature circles.

Encouraging Independent Practice and Productive Struggle

Nakia reported that the students are encouraged to participate in independent practice and productive struggle allowing them to have independence in their work. She said that she has been doing training with the teachers and the coaches to encourage independent practice similar to what the students would experience on a summative assessment.

Mental Health for Educators Professional Development

Nakia reported that the teachers received a professional development training that was facilitated by the Department of Education on Mental Health Educators. The teachers had the opportunity to engage in best practices around wellness and mental health. She said that in this profession teachers get burned out easily and not understanding why. The workshop was a 3-hour training that gave the teacher's great tools and strategies on how to sustain a work life balance.

Assessment

PSSA Training-PSAT (All Members of Faculty and staff)

Nakia reported that they finished their second round of diagnostics internally. She said that they met each of their internal goals that were set in both ELA and Mathematics. In terms of the school wide training, they are now doing the first online training for PSSA. She said that they have a schedule of the upcoming trainings that everyone will need in order to facilitate the assessment. She also said that the instructional coaches participated in a training through the Department of Education on all of the new initiatives for the 2025-2026 PSSA, which will be electronic. Nakia concluded her report and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Renee asked if Nakia could name some of the books that students are reading for Middle School. Nakia said that the 8th graders are reading the autobiography of Malcolm X, Copper Sun, A Raisin in the Sun, The Giver and A Mid Summers Night Dream. She said that these are just a few of the titles but there is a robust list of literature especially since the students are reading a book a month.

Board member Renee also asked if staff could participate in a reading or study group for important information that they need to know culturally. Nakia responded that she would like to talk more about it because it is definitely something that the staff would enjoy doing.

Dr. Baynard asked Nakia if she would share in an email the list of books that were chosen for this year. Nakia said yes, she would send the list to him.

Dr. Baynard also noted the impressive PSSA performance of Harambee students and requested Nakia to provide a regional comparison in the upcoming meeting. Nakia said yes, she would provide that information.

Board member Wade asked how the information that Dr. Baynard is requesting from Nakia differs from the information that was presented earlier.

Dr. Baynard said that there is a larger regional story that they have been talking about for almost eight years that should be celebrated widely. He noted that the achievements should be celebrated within the community, as they reflect a broader academic and social renaissance at happening at Harambee. He said that he doesn't think that we are covering the story broadly. He said that it allows them to think broadly about how to draw more resources because Harambee is the best-untold story in the city.

Greg told members that they would be happy to share that information in an upcoming Board meeting. Greg noted that Harambee continues to lead the way in achievement on standardized test across the Charter sector. The basketball team continues to do well and they have revitalized their drum line, drill team and

cheerleaders. He said that they are facilitating a parade to celebrate their 100th day of school in one week. He said that they continue to do exceedingly well in all domains across the Charter sector. Greg turned the meeting over to David for his report on Operations.

Operations, David Rosario

School Attendance

David shared a power point with members to provide data and give an overview of where they are currently with their Enhanced Student Attendance Plan and what they are planning for next. He said that some of their objectives are to achieve a 95% attendance rate or better for their full student body by June 2025. David noted that they are measured by compliance with PA laws, PDE, and the Charter School Office CSO metrics. He indicated that the total student count was 555 students and he showed charts with breakdowns of student attendance categories and metrics. He reviewed and explained each of the categories pointing out the differences between Harambee and similar schools in the District. The comparison included Active Regular Ed Students, All Special ED Students, Out of District Students and the average daily attendance by grade.

David indicated that they are ahead of similar schools comparatives at 53.29% compared to 36% in similar district schools. He said that the chart indicates school year 2022-2023, which is the latest data and percentage metrics available as of now. Dr. Baynard asked David to explain the 53.29% attendance.

David explained that out of their total school enrollment 53.29% of their students are attending school 95% of the time or better. He said that this comparison describes all similar schools defined as Charter Schools. David said that this data would bring them to where they need to apply their efforts and what their efforts will focus on.

Dr. Baynard said that before moving on to intervention he was wondering if there was a slide that would tell them why students are falling below the 95% and what do we know individually and aggregately about why students are not coming to school. Dr. Baynard said that before we develop solutions it would be great if there were some data to tell them why they are seeing this. He said that we should spend some time polling people to know what it is that is keeping them from coming and then focus efforts and resources on that specific thing. David agreed said that he would make it his mission to get answers and would gather data on the reasons for student absences to better understand the challenges faced by those students who are not meeting attendance goals.

David moved to the final section of the power point and introduced some of the Tiered Interventions that they are currently using. He said that they have the automated robo call system that is going out to parents every morning to alert them of absences. He pointed out that they are also using monthly incentives and just started a monthly attendance award to encourage other students to

follow. He shared a list of automation and tools to increase the culture of attendance and their interventions summary that is currently in progress. David concluded his report and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Larry asked if the interventions listed on the slide were things that are projecting or are they currently in progress. David responded that these are things that they are currently doing in real time.

Board member Jan asked what happens when there is a particular homeroom that is doing exceptionally well. Are their internal motivations in allowing a homeroom to shine and rewarding them for doing so? David said yes, they have identified the students by monthly attendance awards and they are using their social media platform awarding redemption days as an incentive.

Greg indicated that they do attendance incentives by classroom as well. For example, the classroom that has the highest average daily attendance has been given taco parties, ice-cream parties and have even received things like skating trips and bowling trips for that particular class.

Board member Heloise acknowledged the incentives and asked if there is any opportunity on the backend to ask 8th grade students that are leaving and have done well what motivated them, something equivalent to an exit interview. David thanked Board member Heloise and said that her suggestion would be noted.

Board member Wade asked if there is a group of students with chronic absenteeism that are driving the percentages down that they can focus on. David responded that they do have a block of students that have been identified and that number is 119 students that were identified by the 90% or below metric and they are currently focused on them.

Dr. Baynard suggested that David add one more metric to his dashboard based on the 67 students that have perfect attendance. He said that those students with perfect attendance know something, so how do we unlock that 12% (percent's) knowledge and share it with everyone else. Greg gave the floor to Dr. Archer for her report Specialized Services.

Specialized Services, Dr. Archer **ATSI-Corrective Action Report**

Dr. Archer indicated that she would not have any extensive reporting this evening, but would provide a few updates. She said that they have an ATSI corrective action report that is due on Friday.

ESY NOREPs due 2/28/2025

Dr. Archer reported that their Special education teachers have been working to identify students that are eligible for the extended school year so that they can send out the ESY notice of recommended educational placement by February

28th. They are currently collecting that data, as they know that they will have students that automatically qualify. She said that they have students with significant disabilities.

National Jr. Honor Society Leadership Conference

Dr. Archer reported that they will be taking eight students to the National Jr. Honor Society Leadership Conference in Chicago and they will leave on Friday. She encouraged members that have not donated to do so as there is still time before their departure. She said that they have so many exciting workshops that they plan to attend from Friday through Sunday.

Career Pathways Event

Dr. Archer reported that they are starting to prepare for their annual Career Pathways Event where they bring in individuals to speak with their students about different career paths. The event will take place on May 30th, which will be a half-day for staff and students. She will send out notices for the event and urged everyone to place the date on their calendars. Deleah also reported that they are planning an Art & Soul event in February. The event will highlight their students with a fashion show and art by the students. Tickets are available for the event that will take place on March 7th.

Compensatory Education Agreement

Dr. Archer introduced a compensatory education agreement that requires a vote, but could not divulge details, emphasizing the need for privacy under FERPA regulations. She said that there is an agreement that they made with a student at Harambee, a special education student that received a dollar amount in Compensatory Education. She said that they were able to agree upon the amount, which included lawyer fees as well. Dr. Baynard said that he understands the FERPA regulations and the fact that they are not in closed session. He said that they do not know any of the details or the amounts since they have not seen the agreement. Greg said that he understands and if need be they can table the vote and have a conversation relative to the details and then take a vote later.

Dr. Baynard suggested tabling the vote on the agreement until the next meeting. They agreed to present it to the Finance Committee for their review first and then to the Board for a vote. Greg summarized the discussion and said that his interpretation of the discussion was to postpone the vote and they would get the details of the agreement out to the Board for consideration to take a vote during the February meeting. The board agreed to postpone the vote, planning to provide redacted information for review before the February meeting. Board member Wade added that they do not have details so as a procedural note, the Executive Director can execute anything under \$10,000 dollars. Dr. Archer reported that it is higher than 10K with a settlement of \$36,000 and \$8,000 in legal fees. Michelle and Deleah also noted that there are declining case numbers along with much lower amounts that have been paid out over the past eight

years. Dr. Archer concluded her report and Greg passed the meeting to Michelle for her report on Business Finance and HR.

Business, Finance and HR, Michelle Thornton

Michelle reported that she would only have a few points to share as a follow-up to last month's Board meeting where she talked about finalizing the audit. She reported that they have finalized the audit and met the December 31st deadline. She reported that the last part is to complete the 990 form, which is in the process of being finalized for presentation to the finance committee and the Board. She said that they are working with the audit firm to finalize it and once it is in draft form they will be able to present it.

Michelle indicated that they are entering into the budget season for the next fiscal year 2025-26. They will be assessing spending patterns and doing a mid-year review of where they are financially. She said that they will also be planning and meeting with the executive leaders over the next 30 days.

Michelle told members that she included an HR report in the Board packets, which she is providing on a quarterly basis because HR information does not change that much from month to month, so they will continue to provide the report quarterly. She asked members to review the last few pages of the report, which provides details about the employee count, including contracted services. She noted that the report also includes additions for the period of October 2024 through December and terminations for the same period. She showed a total turnover of 5.2% in this period, which she says might appear high but is typical in June and in September. She asked members to review the report and she would develop additional information for the HR report if requested by the Board. Michelle concluded her report and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Wade asked if the HR report is a public document or is it just distributed to the Board. Michelle said that it is not distributed outside of the Board.

Dr. Baynard asked if Michelle would continue to distribute the HR report quarterly or monthly. She responded that it would be distributed quarterly because not much happens on a monthly basis.

Board member Wade asked if there are any large variances that the Board should know about. Michelle responded that there are no significant variances to report. Wade also asked where we are with the ACE report. Greg responded that they received their ACE preview and it is in its final stage and once it has been finalized they will be able to share it with the Board. Greg also mentioned that they will be going into the Charter Renewal process, which will begin July 1st of 2025. Greg stated that they will spend the 2025-2026 school year in the renewal and review process. Greg yielded the floor back to Dr. Baynard.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Public Concerns

None

Motion to Adjourn: Board member Wade made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Board member Larry. All were in favor, none were opposed and it was passed unanimously.

Approval: 8 **AYE:** 0 **Nays:** 0 **Abstentions:** 0 **Absent:** 1

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 26th 2025