

The Trustees in attendance: Rick Rieder, Ezdehar Abuhatab, Nicole Bearce, Ravi Bellur, Steve Creekmur, Lawrence Evans, Thomas Redburn, Trisha Scipio, Scott Sleyster and Jamey Verrilli.

Also present: Jenn Da Silva, Maya Roth- Bisignano, Timeese Townes-Pratt, Brett Peiser, Mike Mann, Kelly Dowling, Brendan Campbell, John Powell, Onome Ufinomue, and Amanda Craft .

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mr. Rieder who noted that the meeting had been duly publicized, as required by law, in *The Star-Ledger* and *The Americano* with updated address information posted on the North Star Academy website.

Mr. Bellur moved to approve the following minutes. Mr. Evans seconded the motion:

- Approval of 9/29/25 Public Session Minutes
- Approval of 9/29/25 Executive Session Minutes

The trustees voted unanimously in approval.

Kelly Dowling opened the meeting by providing a comprehensive update on the State of High School, outlining key developments at WPHS and LPHS, reviewing academic data, and sharing early college-access outcomes for the Classes of 2025 and 2026.

Ms. Dowling opened by highlighting major accomplishments across both high schools. This year, eight students earned prestigious QuestBridge Match scholarships: Yaely Geronimo matched with the University of Pennsylvania; Trinity Omosalami matched with Amherst College; Olabode Bada and Anyinuoore Ajikobi both matched with Colgate College; Melodie Kotoh matched with Yale University; Akaribe Jatto and Zachary Kuffour both matched with Brown University; and Wonder Mensah matched with the University of Notre Dame.

Ms. Dowling shared that the Student Talent and High School Student Talent and Voice programs are off to a strong start. Student Talent Managers, Henry Appiah and Shawn Domingo returned this year, and the team has completed 24 hours of in-person PD and 6 hours of remote PD.

She shared that projects were able to expand this year. A total of 1,149 students are participating across 56 projects in SY25-26, including an increase in STEM offerings and a newly added Mock Trial program. New creative pathways—fashion/sewing, construction arts, and thrifting—were also launched.

She highlighted LPHS's Scholar Athlete program, which includes strength and conditioning, basketball development, a related elective, advising, and a speaker series.

Ms. Dowling noted that WPHS continues to lead in AI integration. A new AI essay-feedback tool correlated with a 0.31-point APUSH score increase and a 21.8% rise in AP pass likelihood.

She also noted that we are in Early conversations with the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation regarding the development of K-12 STEM centers.

Kelly then walked the team through the academic data, using the updated evaluation framework (district, state, NED statewide; and secondary comparisons within 5% of the Uncommon-wide average):

- AP Performance:
 - WPHS led the network with a 71% AP Cohort Index, compared to Uncommon's 53% and LPHS's 48%.
 - WPHS improved 12 percentage points year-over-year.
- SAT Trends:
 - She noted ongoing volatility in SAT data from 2022-2026.
 - WPHS remains the highest-performing group among peers, though variability persists.
- IA / 9th Grade Foundations:
 - LPHS 9th graders ranked #1 in the network in most subjects, with Algebra slightly below UPC.
 - GPA gains and stronger tercile distributions were also highlighted.

Kelly closed with updates on college enrollment and long-term outcomes:

- 4-Year Persistence:
 - Spring 2025 NSC data showed persistence rates varying significantly by income: 16% (lowest-income quartile) to 58% (highest).
 - Uncommon-wide persistence is ~50%; WPHS is slightly higher at ~54%.
 - Persistence by cohort has risen steadily from 2019-2025, with WPHS reaching 85% in the Class of 2025.
- Class of 2025 College Results:
 - ~93% acceptance rate, 85% enrollment rate.
 - Students received \$10.3M in annual grants/scholarships.
 - Average annual loan amount was \$4,334, with 96% borrowing less than \$5,500/year.
 - 21% of college-going students earned full-ride packages; average aid across students was ~\$38,000 per year.
- Class of 2026 Early Outcomes:
 - QuestBridge results have been announced; many ED results will be available in the coming weeks.

She reported that NSA hosted 125 college admissions visits this year, including reps from colleges, military and progressive pathways. Additionally, at LPHS, 39 students participated in competitive summer and pre-college programs, and 100% of those students submitted Early Decision applications.

She concluded by asking the board if they had any questions. There were no questions.

Mr. Rieder asked for a motion to go into executive session. A motion was made to move to an executive session by Mr. Evans and seconded by Ms. Scipio. The trustees voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:05 pm to discuss legal matters, personnel and real estate.

At the end of the executive session, a motion was made by Mr. Evans and then seconded by Ms. Bearce to return to the public session. The trustees voted unanimously to return to the public session at 7:42 pm.

Ms. Da Silva opened the floor to public comments.

Joyleen Quesada shared concerns regarding the school's instructional choices. She stated that it is not the school's role to teach students "what we want" and expressed disappointment in the parent representatives and CAT team. She requested that the school change certain selected books, stating that the current choices promote content she finds inappropriate.

Odaliz Nathan stated that she reviewed the curriculum the previous day. She noted that she has a current 12th-grade student at WPHS who has attended North Star since Kindergarten. She expressed disagreement with the audio material used in class and echoed Joyleen's concerns about the selection of *The Bluest Eye*. She asked where the email or consent form was for parents to opt in to these texts.

Mr. Rieder thanked them for coming to the board meeting to express their concerns.

Ms. Da Silva then presented the following Personnel items to the board for approval:

- *2.1 NSA Personnel Report*

A motion was made by Mr. Bellur and seconded by Mr. Evans to approve the personnel items. The trustees voted unanimously to approve.

Ms. Da Silva then presented the following Finance and Facilities items to the board for approval:

- *3.1 Resolution to Approve the FY25 Budget*
- *3.2 Resolution to Approve Q1 Budget Transfer*
- *3.3 Resolution to Approve Audited Financials for FY24*
- *3.4 Resolution to Approve September and October Financial Reports*

A motion was made by Mr. Sleyster and seconded by Mr. Evans to approve the finance and facilities items. The trustees voted unanimously to approve the financial resolutions.

Ms. Da Silva shared Administrative Resolutions for board approval.

- *4.1 Out-of-District Placement Contract*
- *4.2 Approval of HIB Self Assessment Score*
- *4.3 HIB Report*

A motion was made by Mr. Verrilli and seconded by Mr. Bellur to approve the administrative items. The trustees voted unanimously to approve the administrative resolutions.

A motion was made by Mr. Bellur and seconded by Ms. Bearce to uphold the recommendations of the Student Hearing Committee.

A motion was made to adjourn by Mr. Evans and seconded by Ms. Scipio to adjourn the board of trustees meeting. The trustees voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:54p.m.

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING will be held at **18 Washington Pl. on January 26th, 2026.**