

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

Also present: Jennifer Da Silva, Maya Roth- Bisignano, Timeese Townes-Pratt, Onome Unifinme, John Powell, Liv Anderson, Alana Harper and Oluwapamilerinayo Alao.

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

- Approval of 3/23/26 Public Session Minutes
- Approval of 3/23/26 Executive Session Minutes

The trustees voted unanimously in approval.

Ms. Da Silva opened the meeting by sharing highlights from the recent Newark School Leader Retreat, where school leaders from across the Newark region came together to strengthen collaboration and share best practices in support of student outcomes.

Ms. Da Silva then provided an update on staff retention. She reported that 91% of North Star Academy staff members had signed employment contracts for the 2026-27 school year. She also shared that 76% of staff indicated they were definitely or likely returning on the Mid-Year Staff Survey. Ms. Da Silva noted that these figures reflect the organization's continued focus on employee engagement and retention.

Ms. Da Silva then welcomed two new school leaders to North Star Academy. Equel Easterling was introduced as the new Principal of Clinton Hill Middle School and Vincent Baggett was introduced as the new Director of Operations for Clinton Hill Middle School.

Ms. Da Silva then transitioned the board to Liv Anderson, Senior Director of High School Student Talent, for a presentation on High School Student Talent and Voice.

Ms. Anderson began by sharing the vision of the High School Student Talent Team, emphasizing the belief that all students deserve an outstanding high school education that prepares them for success in college and beyond. She explained that the team's work focuses on providing high-quality co-curricular programming, career exploration opportunities, and experiences that help students discover their passions, talents, and purpose.

Ms. Anderson discussed how Student Talent and Voice programming supports North Star Academy's mission of preparing students for success in college and beyond. She explained that meaningful engagement in extracurricular and career-focused experiences helps students develop compelling personal narratives, strengthen college applications, and build a sense of belonging that contributes to college persistence.

She then outlined the four-year trajectory of Student Talent and Voice programming, describing how students progress through a series of reflective and developmental milestones designed to help them better understand themselves, explore their passions, develop their voice, and define their future goals.

Ms. Anderson highlighted the journey of Sam Nmezi, a Washington Park High School graduate and current student at Wesleyan University. Through coursework, robotics competitions, internships, and leadership opportunities, Sam developed a strong interest in engineering and STEM advocacy. Ms. Anderson noted that Sam was awarded the Princeton Prize in Race Relations for her work creating STEM opportunities for Black and Hispanic students and shared how Student Talent programming helped shape both her college application and career aspirations.

Ms. Anderson reported that 53% of seniors and 58% of juniors indicated they had written, or planned to write, about their Student Talent experiences in their college application essays. She explained that these experiences provide students with meaningful opportunities to reflect on their interests and articulate their personal growth.

The board also learned about the three core pillars of High School Student Talent and Voice: Purpose, Talent, and Voice. Ms. Anderson explained how students develop these areas through internships, career exploration opportunities, project-based learning, competitive teams, talent showcases, advisory programming, and reflection activities.

Ms. Anderson shared that North Star Academy currently offers approximately 60 project-based learning opportunities and four competitive clubs across its high schools, including robotics, debate, media production, event planning, culinary arts, visual arts, podcasting, and artificial intelligence literacy. She highlighted the importance of providing a broad range of experiences that allow students to discover and deepen their interests.

She also discussed partnerships with organizations including BlackRock, BNP Paribas, Citi, Deloitte, and RF Industries, which provide career exploration seminars and networking opportunities for students.

Ms. Anderson then highlighted recent accomplishments across North Star's high schools. These included Washington Park High School's debut drumline performance, participation in the Intramural Debate Competition, and Lincoln Park High School's collaborative fashion show involving multiple student projects and organizations.

The board then heard directly from student representatives Lana Harper of Lincoln Park High School and Oluwapamilerinayo Alao of Washington Park High School. The students discussed their passions, involvement in Student Talent programming, leadership growth, and how these experiences have influenced their future goals and college aspirations.

Ms. Anderson concluded by sharing priorities for the 2026-27 school year, including increasing the quality and rigor of projects and competitive clubs across all schools and expanding Student Talent and Voice programming to serve students in grades K-12. She noted that philanthropy remains critical to sustaining and expanding these opportunities.

Ms. Anderson concluded by inviting questions from the board. Board members expressed appreciation for the presentation and the impact of Student Talent programming on student development and college readiness.

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 Mr. Verrilli. The trustees voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:20 pm to discuss legal matters, personnel and real estate.

At the end of the executive session, a motion was made by Mr. Verrilli and then seconded by Ms. Scipio to return to the public session. The trustees voted unanimously to return to the public session at 7:40 pm.

Ms. Da Silva opened the floor to public comments. There weren't any members of the public in attendance.

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. Verrilli and seconded by Ms. Scipio 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 2026-27 Preliminary Budget*

A motion was made and seconded to approve the financial resolution. The trustees voted unanimously to approve.

Ms. Da Silva then presented the following Administrative Resolutions for board approval:

- *4.1 BCSS 2026-27 ESY Contract – T. Williams*
- *4.2 UCESC 2026-27 Out of District Contract*
- *4.3 2025 HIB Self-Assessment*
- *4.4 HIB Report*

A motion was made and seconded to approve the administrative resolutions. The trustees voted unanimously to approve.

Ms. Da Silva provided updates regarding board expansion efforts, including the introduction of prospective trustee David Silber of Citadel Securities. She also shared that updated bylaws would be presented for board consideration at the June meeting.

Ms. Da Silva then provided an update on North Star Academy Independence Park, the network's newest K-8 campus. She shared that the school will open at the former Our Lady of Fatima Daycare location on Jefferson Street and currently has 50 kindergarten students

enrolled for the 2026-27 school year, along with a growing waitlist. She also reported that the organization remains engaged in due diligence regarding potential permanent facilities.

A motion was made by Mr. Verrilli and seconded by Ms. Scipio to adjourn the meeting. The trustees voted unanimously to adjourn. The trustees voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:05p.m.

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING will be held via **Zoom on June 9, 2026.**