

The Renaissance Charter School

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Approved Minutes

January 7th, 2026

The Renaissance Charter School

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

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1. Chairperson's Message given by Monte Joffee at 9:05 AM.
2. Roll was called: Monte Joffee, Everett Boyd, Stacey Gauthier, all joined remotely, Rebekah Oakes also joined a few minutes late. Daniel Fanelli, Raymond Johnson, Chester Hicks, Jose Mane, were all present in person. Dr. Rachel Mandel was absent.
3. Last Month's Minutes approved by acclamation.
4. School Management Team Report – Dan gave the SMT report, attached below in full. Dan reported that there have been shifts of staffing since going on break. Bridget is now AP K-8 and also involves Shayla, Alana and Adam taking on new roles to support the 5th grade. Meredith has unfortunately had to resign for personal reasons. Dan and Stacey have been starting a search to replace her.
5. No Board Members' New Business reported.
6. Public Speaking – Martha Ortiz, a parent of a new student this year who is very happy here, glad to be part of TRCS. She respectfully encouraged more communication around Bridget's change of role, as her daughter was looking forward to continuing

"Developing Leaders for the Renaissance of New York"

with her in 5th grade. Dan thanked her for her comments and promised to try to improve timely communications. He went on to say that TRCS has a historical commitment to promoting from within, and Bridget's promotion has exemplified that desire to support the mission of the school.

7. Adjournment of Public Meeting at 9:45 AM.
8. The board members went immediately into Executive Session.

Note: Principal's Report follows directly.

Principal's Report – December 2025

The Renaissance Charter School

Overview

December marked a strong close to the first academic trimester and an important moment for reflection. Across the school, we continue to see progress in instructional practice, student engagement, and community connection. As we enter the second half of the year, our focus remains on sustaining instructional momentum, strengthening systems of support, and ensuring students are well prepared for upcoming assessments.

Teaching & Learning

Our instructional focus this fall has centered on **student discourse, higher-order questioning, progress monitoring, literacy development, and conceptual understanding in mathematics**, aligned to our school-wide goals and the Danielson Framework (Domain 3). Through walkthroughs, observations, and coaching conversations, school leaders and teacher leaders have conducted **over 130 classroom visits** since September.

As a result, we are seeing:

- Increased **student-to-student academic discussion**
- More consistent use of **Why/How or Prove It questioning** that requires students to explain reasoning and cite evidence
- Improved alignment between lesson planning, priority standards, and assessment data

Literacy: Main Idea Across Content Areas

In response to **Achievement Network data** indicating a gap in students' understanding of the **main idea of informational texts**, we facilitated professional development for **non-ELA content teachers** focused on explicitly teaching main idea within their disciplines. This professional development was completed at **both schools**, with aligned sessions led by **Dan Fanelli and Rashid Johnson**.

This work draws directly from the **Lavinia “Red Thread” ELA curriculum** used in the lower school and emphasizes the use of **genre frames** to support students in identifying and articulating the main idea of nonfiction texts. The goal is to ensure that content-area teachers reinforce this foundational literacy skill consistently across subjects.

During recent classroom observations following the break, we have already seen early evidence of this work in practice, particularly in **social studies classrooms**, where teachers are explicitly

using genre frames to support students' comprehension of nonfiction texts. These early indicators are promising and reflect growing coherence across content areas.

This work is intentionally not a one-time professional development. In ongoing meetings with instructional coaches and teachers across grades **K–12**, we are continuing to strengthen this focus through additional supports and structures. Beginning **January 26**, we will launch a schoolwide initiative incorporating **CommonLit** to further reinforce main idea instruction across content areas. This initiative will provide shared tools, planning supports, and a **common instructional language** for teaching main idea. Mastery of this standard is essential, as it underpins students' ability to access and succeed with other literacy standards and supports improved performance on **state and Regents assessments**.

Mathematics: Conceptual Understanding

As we return from the winter break, there is a renewed sense of urgency around strengthening instruction in **both ELA and mathematics**, particularly in areas where prior data indicated the need for improvement. To support math instruction, we partnered with a **Eureka Squared instructional coach**, beginning with professional development for school leaders followed by classroom-based coaching and observations for teachers.

Through this work, we have identified specific components of the curriculum that require focused implementation to strengthen student learning. While assessment outcomes remain important, this work is centered on building students' **conceptual understanding of mathematics**—ensuring students understand the *why* behind the math, not just procedures. Recent observations have already shown teachers pushing students to explain their mathematical reasoning, an encouraging early indicator of this instructional shift.

Assessment & Regents Preparation

As we move into the upcoming **state and Regents testing season**, we are implementing a clear and coordinated plan to prepare students for success. In mid-January, students will complete internal assessments, including **Achievement Network Assessment 2**, which will provide critical data to guide instructional planning. At the elementary level, students in grades **K–5** have been benchmarked and regrouped to provide more targeted instructional support. Middle school benchmarking will be finalized shortly, resulting in updated instructional groupings.

At the high school level, we are placing particular emphasis on **January Regents preparation**. All **11th-grade students will take the January ELA Regents**, which represents the final administration of the current exam format that has been in place for the past 15 years. Beginning in June, students will transition to a newly redesigned Regents exam. After careful discussion with the high school ELA team, we determined that this cohort is well positioned to take the current exam given their familiarity with the content and structure.

To support this effort, **ELA teachers, Shahreen, and Nicole** have been providing targeted after-school instruction to prepare students for the January ELA Regents. In addition, a **targeted Algebra Regents support group** is being led by a math teacher to support students who need to

earn Regents credit toward graduation. This work aligns directly with our schoolwide math goal of achieving a **score of 75 or higher on at least one Math Regents exam.**

Across grade levels, we are also planning to leverage **independent reading groups** and other instructional structures to strengthen the specific skills students must demonstrate on state and Regents exams. Our goal is to ensure that assessment preparation is **purposeful, skill-based, and embedded within strong instruction**, rather than treated as a separate or isolated effort.

Student Achievement & Data

Students will be taking both ANET A2 and the Winter NWEA internal assessments, our teams will actively analyzing interim assessment data to identify trends, address gaps in learning, and refine instructional planning. This work supports our long-term goal of **20% growth on state and Regents exams** and informs targeted instructional adjustments as we move through the winter and spring.

School Culture & Community

December was an especially strong month for community-building across all grade levels. The **Renaissance Gala** showcased student artwork and featured outstanding vocal performances by both elementary and high school students. We are grateful to **Ryan, Joy, and Robert** for their leadership in preparing students, and to **Rebecca and Caroline** for their coordination and support.

Students also participated in the local **Christmas Tree Lighting** near Renaissance 2, where **11th graders** performed alongside **kindergarten and first-grade students**. Organized by **Shaker's office**, the event included **Assemblyman Raga & Cruz** and reflected the strength of our broader community partnerships. A multilingual reading of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* in **English, Spanish, and Mandarin** highlighted the diversity of our greater community in Elmhurst and Jackson Heights. Thank you to Sien, Marlen for doing the Mandarin and Spanish parts of the reading along side Assemblyman Raga. Also thank you to Anahi, Omar, Marlen, Andrea, and Michelle, who provided snacks and Hot chocolate for the event to the great community.

Additional highlights included the **Middle School Festival of Lights** in Jackson Heights, **Jingle Mingle** in the elementary school, and a **senior-led community feast** in the high school. These events provided meaningful opportunities for student leadership, collaboration, and cultural celebration. We extend special thanks to our coordinators and to **our co-coordinators Nicole, Shahreen, James, Ariel, Daniela and Joe** for their leadership and organization of these events that make Renaissance unique and special for our students and their families.

Staffing & Operations

Staffing remained largely stable throughout the fall; however, during December we made several **strategic staffing adjustments** to better align adult strengths with student needs and to strengthen instructional support across grade levels. These changes involved **Bridget, Shayla, Alana, and Adam**, and were communicated clearly to families through a parent-facing letter to ensure transparency and continuity.

We are excited to formally welcome **Bridget** back to the school community in her role as **Assistant Principal, Pre-K–8**. Bridget brings strong instructional leadership, deep institutional knowledge, and a clear commitment to supporting teachers and students. In this role, she will play a key part in strengthening teaching and learning, coaching teachers, and supporting schoolwide instructional priorities. We look forward to her continued growth as a leader within the Renaissance organization and to the positive impact her leadership will have across grade levels.

These staffing adjustments were made thoughtfully and with the goal of:

- Ensuring consistent, high-quality instruction for students
- Aligning staff expertise to areas of greatest instructional need
- Strengthening collaboration and team structures

Importantly, these changes did not result in instructional disruption. School leaders worked closely with teachers and families to ensure smooth transitions and continued student support. Our office and operations teams also played a critical role in supporting daily school functions during a particularly busy month.

Looking Ahead

As we move into January and beyond, our focus will be on:

- Deepening main idea instruction across content areas (K–12)
- Strengthening conceptual understanding in mathematics
- Using assessment data to drive targeted instruction and interventions
- Preparing students for state and Regents Exams
- Continuing to build a strong, joyful, and academically rigorous school culture

Principal's Closing Reflection

As we close the calendar year and enter the second half of the school year, I am deeply appreciative of the dedication and professionalism of our teachers, staff, and school leaders. The progress outlined in this report reflects a shared commitment to continuous improvement and to ensuring that all students are challenged, supported, and prepared for success. While important work lies ahead, the focus, collaboration, and instructional momentum across the school give me great confidence in our ability to meet our goals and continue moving our work forward in service of students and families.