

Harrisburg City School District
Amended Recovery Plan
2023 – 2024 Report for Quarter 2
October 1 – December 31, 2023



Dr. Lori A. Suski, Court Appointed Receiver

Harrisburg School District

1601 State Street

Harrisburg, PA 17103

lsuski@hbgsd.us

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Authority & Purpose

The Harrisburg School District is halfway through this three-year period of receivership. The first three-year cycle began on June 17, 2019 and was renewed on June 17, 2022 by the Honorable William Tully. It is the desire of the elected School Board to exit receivership at the conclusion of the current three-year cycle, which is set to expire on June 17, 2025. Chief Recovery Officer, Dr. Travis Waters, is responsible for monitoring the 62 initiatives of the Amended Recovery Plan and advising the Receiver of progress made toward achievement of plan goals. Section 672-A (b) (2) of the Pennsylvania Public School Code requires the submission of a quarterly report to the Secretary of Education. This report reflects the period from October 1 through December 31, 2023, which is the second quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal year.

At the end of December 2023, the Honorable William Tully approved the proposed amendment to the plan which was submitted to the court for consideration in July 2023. The amendment modifies the academic goals to focus less on standardized test scores and more on the creation of systems, structures, and supports necessary to help students achieve academically.

District Demographics

Enrollment has decreased this quarter across the District. When school opened in August 2023, there were 6,389 total students enrolled. As of December, enrollment had dropped to 6,245 students, with a total loss of 144 students (16 from the District's cyber program, Harrisburg Virtual Learning Academy, and 128 from the brick-and-mortar schools).

<i>Period</i>	<i>Brick-and-Mortar</i>	<i>Harrisburg Virtual Learning Academy</i>	<i>Total Enrollment</i>
<i>September 2023</i>	5932	457	6389
<i>December 2023</i>	5804	441	6245

A breakdown of enrollment by building appears below:

<i>Building</i>	<i>June</i> <i>2023</i>	<i>September</i> <i>2023</i>	<i>December</i> <i>2023</i>	<i>Change in</i> <i>Enrollment</i>
Ben Franklin	705	730	750	+20
Camp Curtin	475	491	475	-16
Cougar Academy	316	324	315	-9
Downey	376	387	408	+21
Foose	486	507	509	-2
Harrisburg High: John Harris Campus	1370	1419	1343	-76
Harrisburg High: SciTech Campus	325	324	313	-11
Marshall	76	75	83	+8
Math/Science	387	384	378	-6
Melrose	623	648	615	-33

Rowland	590	615	560	-55
Scott	458	485	496	+11
District Total	6187	6389	6245	-144

The number of students enrolled in outplacement has increased from 164 at the beginning of the school year to 220 as of December 2023. This increase of 56 students is mainly due to administrative transfers since there were only two expulsions during this period. This is a practice that must be examined. Outplacements are costly to the District and should not occur unless an absolute last resort.

Placement	Sept 2023	Sept 2023	Dec 2023	Dec 2023
	Reg Ed	Spec Ed	Reg Ed	Spec Ed
Catapult Learning	2	34	0	35
Capital Academy				
Cougar Paws at Hamilton	25	1	36	0

Cougar Middle Years at Hamilton	14	1	27	1
Cougar Achieve at Hamilton	10	1	30	1
Cougar Excel at Hamilton	57	19	54	20
Merakey	0	2	0	1
New Story (Cumberland & Hbg)	0	10	0	10
Yellow Breeches	0	3	0	5

Dauphin County Technical School (DCTS) has lost 12 students enrolled from Harrisburg High School from September to December 2023 with total enrollment of 245 Harrisburg students compared with 257 at the

start of the school year. It will be important to determine why 12 students have left the school. The District is aware of only one student who was forced to return to Harrisburg SD due to an expulsion from DCTS.

Charter/cyber charter school enrollment has increased by 253 students since the beginning of the school year. As of December 2023, there are a total of 1,419 students enrolled in charter/cyber charter schools with 601 of those students attending Commonwealth Charter Academy.

Academic Performance

The District continues to focus on the improvement of climate and culture in each building. PBIS and MTSS implementation with fidelity are critical to the success of ensuring an environment conducive to learning. Although there is still much work to be done in this area, the District has realized some successes this quarter. Student suspensions are down in several buildings as principals look for alternative forms of discipline rather than the traditional exclusion from school. Mental health support services are available to students via Pennsylvania Counseling and Effective School Solutions. These service providers work with

caseloads of students in need of more intensive supports than can be provided by school counselors and social workers.

Consistent student attendance continues to be a major concern with few schools meeting the 90% target. This quarter attendance dropped from 87.01% in October to 82.47% in December 2023. Building principals continue to monitor daily attendance, and school counselors are charged with conducting Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) meetings with parents of students who are habitually truant.

2023-2024 Monthly Percent of Attendance District and School Totals Chart

<u>Schools/District</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Benjamin Franklin	87.25	83.65	82.09
Downey	89.06	86.84	86.72
Foose	90.87	86.5	87.06
Marshall	91.46	86.92	86.07
Melrose	90.68	91.46	90.28
Scott	88.38	85.37	84.85
Camp Curtin	86.44	83.52	82.28
Cougar Academy	91.43	89.46	88.9
Rowland	83.45	81.41	78.15
Math/Science	94.00	91.88	90.28
John Harris	79.77	76.93	71.72
SciTech	<u>92.55</u>	<u>89.42</u>	<u>89.41</u>
District	<u>87.01</u>	<u>84.45</u>	<u>82.47</u>

As the District seeks ways to motivate students to attend school, one of Superintendent Turman's objective performance standards for the 2023-24 school year is to build a career pathways framework. To that end, the District has contracted Leland Nelson of Think Tank Consulting to bring back some elements of the former R.O.A.R. Academy career pathways program that were successful previously. Johntrae Williams met with Superintendent Turman and the Receiver on October 9, 2023, to discuss a potential partnership with Harrisburg High School students who are interested in the film industry. Mr. Williams worked in the District for 11 years and was instrumental in starting some career pathway clusters related to communications. Ten (10) students from John Harris campus are participating in a medical assistant apprenticeship program with Hamilton Health which commenced in October. A meeting was held with Judd Pittman, Director of Career & Technical Education at the PA Department of Education, on October 31, 2023, to discuss the process and regulations for potential future development of Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs within the Harrisburg School District.

Another initiative this year geared toward improving student performance is early release Wednesdays for teacher professional development. This sustained, job-embedded professional learning time is targeted to support several District initiatives such as AIMS Institute's Pathways to Proficient Reading.

This quarter the administration finalized the District's three-year comprehensive plan for submission to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The plan was presented at the October 24, 2023 School Board meeting and put on public display for 30 days. No feedback was received, so the plan was approved by the Receiver and submitted via the Future Ready PA portal.

The first marking period ended on October 31, 2023. Report cards were issued in early November, and parent/teacher conferences were held on November 21 - 22, 2023.

Effective October 2023, each building principal is responsible for making a public presentation during scheduled Committee of the Whole and/or School Board/Receiver General Business meetings throughout the 2023-24 school year. The purpose of these presentations is to increase accountability of the building

leaders for student performance by having them “own their data.” The following presentations were made this quarter at public meetings of the School Board/Receiver:

1. Harrisburg High School – SciTech Campus – Dr. Sieta Achampong & Mr. Domineak Commodore
2. Camp Curtin Academy – Mr. Darnell Montgomery & Ms. Aquila Hasan
3. Downey Elementary School – Ms. Rhonda Eckenroth & Ms. Jennifer Branca

The PDE statewide team visited with the HBGSD leadership team on December 7, 2023, to review progress toward school goals for the five (5) CSI buildings. Stronger results were evident in the buildings where the contracted School Improvement Facilitator (SIF) is supporting the team on a biweekly basis.

Portia Slaughter, Assistant to the Superintendent, provided a [presentation](#) on the academic progress and initiatives of the District at the November 28, 2023 School Board/Receiver General Business meeting.

Administration and Governance

A key indicator that the District would be ready to potentially exit receivership in June 2025 is the ability of the elected School Board to conduct business in an effective, professional manner. As the District works toward that goal, the Receiver continues to permit the elected School Board to actively participate in the monthly meetings even though they have no voting authority. Board members are given the opportunity to participate in discussion on each motion prior to the Receiver voting. They are also expected to provide reports for the various committees in which they participate and make meaningful comments as part of the roundtable at the conclusion of the meeting. While the Board is appreciative of the Receiver's willingness to involve them in meetings, at times, some Board members take advantage of these times to make comments that are not constructive. Instead, the comments are viewed by observers to be attempts to undermine the credibility of administrators, micromanage, and occasionally garner unnecessary attention from the public. Recorded meetings this quarter show some Board members asking questions during the public meeting that could easily be addressed by the Administration through the Superintendent prior to

the meeting instead of putting the Administration on the spot during the public meeting to ask those questions. This tactic serves no relevant purpose except to put the Administration on the defensive and to prolong the meeting duration. This remains an area of concern that the Receiver will be working on with the Board over the next year with the assistance of PSBA. Another area in which training is needed is speaking to the media when not the designated spokesperson for the District. Board members are often contacted by local media for comment on hot topics. It is customary in most districts that the Superintendent as the 10th member of the Board communicates with the media rather than elected Board members who often lack sufficient detail to respond effectively. For example, this quarter a Board member commented to the media regarding the Superintendent's proposed plan for redistricting. Board member's comments were truncated in the eventual news clip and made it sound like this plan is because of wanting to exit receivership, which is a fallacy. Media inquiries are best handled by the District's Public Relations Coordinator and/or Superintendent of Schools who are experienced at communicating with news outlets.

Executive sessions were held with the School Board and Receiver on October 10, October 24, November 14, and November 28, 2023. The Receiver limits discussion at these closed-door sessions to topics allowable under the Sunshine Act, which include student disciplinary matters, personnel matters, and legal matters.

Continuing education of School Board members is paramount to the future success of the Board to function independent of a Receiver. With that goal in mind, the Receiver continues to schedule mini-retreats with the Board to provide information on critical topics. An example is that on October 17, 2023, the Board and Receiver met with Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates to review the Districtwide Facilities [Study](#) that was recently finalized. This session enabled the Board to be informed about the millions of dollars in facility needs throughout the District and ask relevant questions of the architect of record.

Board Secretary Jatoya Drayton continues to demonstrate growth in her role. The Receiver met with her on November 15, 2023, to review the requirements for the mailing of the notification of reorganization letter to all Board members at least five days prior to the scheduled Board Reorganization meeting in December. The Receiver also met with Board Secretary Drayton on November 30 to review the agenda for the Board

Reorganization Meeting which was conducted on December 5, 2023. New Board member Autumn Anderson was sworn in, and re-elected Board members Terricia Radcliff, Ellis Roy, Doug Thompson Leader, and James Thompson also took the oath of office administered by the Honorable Hanif Johnson. Roslyn Copeland was elected President and Brian Carter was elected Vice-President. The Receiver appointed Board members to represent the School Board on the Dauphin County Technical School Joint Operating Committee, PSBA Liaison, LERTA Board, HACC Delegate Board, and Act 141 Advisory Committee.

The administration continues to review policies that are recommended for revision by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. This quarter the Administration brought forward a new policy for Therapy Dogs (Policy 718.1) for Receiver approval.

Operations

Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates, the District's Architect of Record, recently completed a District-wide Facility Study. The study showed that there are nearly \$130 million in capital needs that exist in District schools. The administration will now use this information to develop a ten-year capital projects plan.

The Administration has devoted much time and attention this quarter to a master [plan](#) for District reconfiguration of school buildings. The purpose behind this initiative is to reduce overcrowding in several schools by returning to neighborhood schools. With the renovation of Steele Elementary School set to be completed by August 2024, an opportunity exists to adjust enrollment at several elementary schools. The administration has been working with *Cropper GIS* to consider possible redistricting options. The Receiver met with Fred Withum of Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates (CRA) on November 14, 2023 to review the student enrollment projections compared to the *Cropper GIS* numbers that were received. Superintendent Turman conducted several parent and staff meetings during the month of December to explain the proposed District reconfiguration for 2024-25. Mr. Turman reported support for his proposed plan. Part of the reconfiguration would return Lincoln to an elementary school and require the relocation of the District Office. The Administration visited the former Girl Scouts of America building on Hale Avenue in Harrisburg and considered making an offer. The location directly across from the Marshall Math Science Academy is optimal; however, the footprint of the building does not provide sufficient space to house the student

enrollment center. With a desire to house all administration and the enrollment center under one roof for better service delivery, the Receiver and key administrators also toured the HACC Midtown #1 building on November 8, 2023 to look at available space on the second floor. Again, the location of the facility is optimal in the heart of Midtown, but the space is insufficient to house all. The Receiver and Superintendent also met with HACC President Dr. Sygielski to discuss potential lease space availability on the HACC main campus for the School District's administrative offices and toured the second floor of the Ted Lick Building on December 1, 2023, but it was ultimately decided that is not the best location for easy access to the District Office for parents and community. Since none of these options provided the necessary space to allow the entire administration and the student enrollment center to be housed in the same location, the Administration continues to search for another building to purchase or lease within the City of Harrisburg.

Another extensive focus this quarter has been on the fate of the abandoned William Penn High School and surrounding land. The Receiver formed a task force to study various alternatives to demolishing the building. The task force began its work in early October 2023 with four meetings held over the quarter. Some

of the task force members formed a subcommittee who proposed resurrecting William Penn as a career and technical education center. Proposals were also presented by Capital Rebirth, Fire Chief Brian Enterline, Turrean Management, and Higher-Level Community Outreach.

A fire at William Penn on the morning of December 11, 2023, resulted in the need to expedite decisions regarding cleanout of the building debris and abatement of asbestos after the City of Harrisburg issued an emergency declaration to force the District to take action that should have occurred a decade ago. The Receiver spoke with an environmental attorney, Joel Bolstein, on December 12, 2023, to ensure that the District handles disposal of hazardous waste appropriately. The Administration met that day to determine the next steps for remediation of hazardous waste.

As the District pursues opportunities to save money, sustainable energy is a key focus. A meeting was held with Claire Maulhardt of Capital Region Water (CRW) on November 7, 2023, to discuss the City Beautiful H2O Plan. CRW expressed interest in partnering with the Harrisburg School District on ways to expand green infrastructure and receive stormwater tax credits. The Receiver is arranging a subsequent meeting with the

Chief Operations Administrator to open the dialogue. The Receiver, Superintendent and Chief Operations Administrator also met with representatives of Valta Energy on November 27, 2023 to be introduced to possible renewable energy projects, such as solar panels, for the District.

At the November 28th School Board/Receiver General Business meeting, the Receiver approved the order of long-lead equipment, such as chillers, to proceed with the HVAC upgrades to both Hamilton and Camp Curtin in the summer of 2024. These projects will be funded by ESSER III and Capital Reserve funds.

The District was pleased to unveil a newly installed floor in the Kimber Gymnasium at Harrisburg High School's John Harris campus this quarter. The Receiver approved the dedication of the floor to retired basketball coach Kirk Smallwood whose name was painted on the floor in appreciation for his many years of dedicated service to Harrisburg School District. The School Board, Administration and Receiver attended a ceremony honoring Coach Smallwood at halftime of the boys' basketball game on December 7, 2023.

Financial Management

A meeting was held with Chris Celmer of Devopar Consulting on October 10, 2023, to discuss assistance with pursuing Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) and support for Assistant Superintendent Dr. Marisol Craig with charter school recapture strategies. These are two key initiatives of the Amended Recovery Plan that require focused attention. The Receiver has had conversations with the presidents of two educational institutions within the City of Harrisburg to request voluntary payments in lieu of taxes. Due to their own fiscal situations, both declined to participate.

A contract with Conrad Siegel was approved this quarter to conduct an actuarial analysis of the District's healthcare costs. The District is concerned about the accuracy of data available from its benefits consultant, Gallagher, and the possibility that the District is underfunding its self-insured healthcare program. Constant meeting cancellations, lack of a plan summary document, and no performance review data are causing the administration to lean toward moving away from their services for the 2024-25 school year. The District received the results of the actuarial analysis from Conrad Siegel weeks later which

confirmed that the District has been underfunded for health care. This situation resulted in a necessary budgetary transfer in the amount of \$6.5 million from the General Fund to the Internal Service Fund 60. The bargaining units were appreciative of not having to bear those costs; however, it will be necessary to make changes to plan design for future years to prevent further underfunding issues in future years.

Another of the superintendent's objective performance standards for 2023-24 is the development of a plan to procure services from local vendors of color. The Receiver met with Biko Taylor of MAXiko Consulting on October 12 to review preliminary results of the MBE analysis. A subsequent team meeting was held on October 26 to review the results of the MBE analysis with recommendations made for goals to increase the utilization of local vendors of color. A meeting was held on November 9, 2023, with Biko Taylor of MAXiko Consulting to gauge the Receiver's perspective on the recent meeting during which the results of the MBE/WBE procurement analysis were shared. The Receiver discussed an extension of Mr. Taylor's contracted services to begin building policies and procedures to better position the District to develop business relationships with local vendors of color.

The Receiver approved the Treasurer's Report for the period ending August 31, 2023 in the amount of \$57,051,134.66 and budget transfers in the amount of \$261,364.58 at the October 24 School Board/Receiver General Business Meeting. The Receiver also approved a transfer of \$221,689.26 from the General Fund to the Capital Reserve Fund which represents the proceeds of the Woodward property sale.

CFO Dr. Marcia Stokes and the Receiver participated in the S&P Global Rating Call on November 16, 2023. The Receiver was asked to provide an update on progress toward Amended Recovery Plan goals. Representatives from Raymond James, the District's financial advisors, listened in on the call and complimented the District on being the "most prepared they have ever seen" for a ratings call.

At the November 28, 2023, School Board/Receiver General Business Meeting, the Receiver approved the Treasurer's Report for the period ending September 30, 2023 in the amount of \$83,634,298.22 and budget transfers in the amount of \$1,516,973.23. The Accelerated Budget Opt Out Resolution Certifying Tax Rate within Inflation Index for the 2024-2025 School Year was also adopted at this meeting. The Act 1 adjusted index for the Harrisburg School District for the 2024-2025 budget year is 8.1%.

Dr. Marcia Stokes timely filed the Annual Financial Report (AFR) by November 30, 2023.

PDE Consultant Ryan Stewart met with the Receiver on December 11, 2023, to discuss opportunities to realize savings on District utility costs and to maximize ACCESS dollars. Subsequent meetings were scheduled with Cenergistic and the administration after the new year.

Local auditors BBD, LLP were on site this fall to conduct the annual audit of the District's financial statements. The 2022-23 audited financial statements came back clean with no material weaknesses or deficiencies noted. This is the second consecutive year with no findings due to the excellent work of Chief Financial Officer, Dr. Marcia Stokes, and her team in the business office.

Revenue

This quarter Hanson Community Partners successfully performed grant-writing duties for Harrisburg School District. The District was awarded a competitive *Preventing School Violence* Grant of \$918,815 over a three-year period from the U.S. Department of Justice. The District also received the *Refugee School Impact* Grant in the amount of \$65,839, and the *School Violence Protection Program* Grant in the amount of \$398,111.

The application for the *Stronger Connections* Grant was submitted this quarter. The District also submitted for special education contingency funds but only for one student whose expenses exceeded the threshold.

Meetings were held on October 11 with Kelly McGonnell of Dauphin County to discuss an upcoming EPA grant opportunity and Louie Krak of the Office of Critical Investments for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to discuss the possibility of applying for Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) tax credits.

Superintendent Turman attended the Rotary Meeting on November 6, 2023, where the District was presented with a check for \$15,000 from the proceeds of the Rotary's 25th annual community pancake breakfast held at Harrisburg High School – John Harris Campus – on the morning of Homecoming 2023. These funds will support homeless and displaced students in the Harrisburg School District.

Danielle Lewis, Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Harrisburg, and John Hanson, grant writer, met with the Receiver on October 17 to collaborate on the development of an environmental education grant.

The District applied on December 22, 2023 for the *PA Mental Health Learning Grant* through PHEAA. If awarded, the District will receive \$25,000 in funding for school psychology internships.

Workforce

The Receiver denied HEA grievance #1-23-24 at Step 4 regarding the involuntary transfer of two teachers from middle school ISS teachers to 5th grade teachers at Melrose Elementary School. The Harrisburg Education Association (HEA) has filed for arbitration.

The Receiver participated in two hours of witness preparation with attorneys from Fox Rothschild on October 9, 2023 for the AFSCME arbitration hearing. Multiple documents, emails, text messages and voice mails were uploaded for review, but on the date of the arbitration hearing, a settlement was reached, and the hearing was subsequently cancelled.

A meeting was held on October 26 with legal counsel to determine settlement authority for a pending workers' compensation claim. The Superintendent, Director of Human Resources, and Receiver met on November 28 with the attorney handling the District's workers' compensation claims. Although settlement authority on a pending claim was already provided by the Receiver, additional demands were made by opposing counsel that required further discussion.

Superintendent Turman decided to shift two administrators to provide new leadership at Rowland Academy. The shifting of administrators occurred this month with 10th grade John Harris principal Kevin Deane moving to Rowland Academy as interim building principal and Rowland Academy Principal Melissa Floyd beginning her transition to Director of HVLA. SciTech Assistant Principal Domineak Commodore shifted to John Harris to assume Mr. Deane's duties. SciTech's principal Dr. Achampong has indicated that she can do without an assistant principal at this time because she does not want further disruption by moving someone a quarter of the way into the school year.

HEA continues to express concerns with the timeliness of responses from the Office of Human Resources. Superintendent Turman is working with the Director of Human Resources to develop a plan for expanding the office as a result of the analysis performed by 425 Consulting.

This quarter the District developed the following procedure for documenting workers' compensation claims:

- *All injuries sustained in the performance of an employee's work duties must be reported even if medical treatment is not received. Employees must complete and submit the Workers Comp Accident Investigation Form to their supervisor to document and report the injury. The Workers Comp Accident Investigation Form can be found by logging into the District's website and accessing the following links: Department > Human Resources > Workplace Safety > Workers Comp Accident Investigation Form. Upon review of the form, supervisors should submit the complete form to Human Resources at the email address listed above.*
- *Employees seeking treatment for a work-related injury must obtain treatment from a designated health care provider for ninety (90) days from the date of the first visit to a designated provider. The listing of Designated Providers can be found by logging into the District's website and accessing the following links: Department > Human Resources > Workplace Safety > Workers Compensation Notice to Employees. Employees may only seek treatment from a non-designated provider during the initial ninety (90) day period in emergency situations.*

- *All documentation related to work-related injury claims must be provided to the Human Resources Office at the email address listed above.*

The District is currently negotiating settlements on two outstanding workers' compensation claims.

Supervisors and directors are responsible for monitoring overtime for their employees. Permission must be granted by a supervisor/director before employees are permitted to remain at work beyond their contractual day.

For the first two quarters of fiscal year 2023-24, the District is tracking \$31,500.02 less (31%) than the same time last school year for overtime costs:

Positions	Object Code	Q1 FY24	Q2 FY24		Q1 FY23	Q2 FY23
Secretary/Clerical	153	\$ 20,771.92	\$ 17,021.08		\$ 26,170.62	\$ 33,781.01
Grounds Services OT	163	\$ 413.21	\$ 31.88		\$ 608.46	\$ 721.90
Warehouse/Maintenance	173	\$ 355.75	\$ 235.41		\$ 411.28	\$ 658.65
Custodial/Safety/Food Service	183	\$ 16,007.09	\$ 39,300.29		\$ 94,584.92	\$ 47,585.55
Para/Office/FES	193	\$ 5,922.87	\$ 12,972.81		\$ 10,426.43	\$ 18,314.38
		\$ 43,470.84	\$ 69,561.47		\$ 132,201.71	\$ 101,061.49

All staff positions are evaluated through attrition and when requests for additional positions are received from the administration. With the exhaustion of ESSER funds, it will be critical for the Superintendent to continuously evaluate the necessity of each position in the District to ensure return on investment as ESSER-funded positions will either be eliminated or transferred to the General Fund at the end of the 2023-24 school year.

Act 141 Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 12, 2023
5:00 p.m.

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Dr. Sieta Achampong, Beth Light, Eric Turman, Dr. Tamara Willis, Dr. Andria Saia, James Thompson, Melanie Cook, Dr. Marisol Craig, Dr. Marcia Stokes, Doug Thompson Leader, Michele Rolko, Laura Harding, Dr. Travis Waters, Dr. Lori Suski

- Dr. Waters welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dr. Saia announced the appointment of Ms. Laura Harding to the Act 141 Advisory Committee. Ms. Harding briefly introduced herself and then the committee members introduced themselves.
- Dr. Marcia Stokes, Chief Financial Officer, presented the initiatives that comprise the areas of her responsibility for the Amended Recovery Plan (see attached presentation). Dr. Stokes indicated that all financial initiatives are either completed or in progress. Dr. Stokes reviewed the color-coding on the power point – green for completed, yellow for in progress.
- Dr. Stokes updated the committee on the following highlights of each initiative:
 - OP01 – The District is using OnBase to track contracts.
 - OP02 – Major contracts are reviewed (most recently food service, custodial/maintenance, and transportation).
 - FM01 – Forecast 5[®] is utilized to assist with development of projections.
 - FM02 – Fund Balance and Capital Reserve have increased significantly since 2019. The District cannot borrow based on current debt service schedule. There are over \$100 million in current capital needs throughout the District. The

District must also have about six months' worth of claims costs in the Internal Service Fund 60 to cover health care claims since the District is self-insured.

- FM03 – The District's facility study was presented at a recent School Board retreat. Several smaller projects were accomplished over the summer using ESSER funds (restroom renovations; sealcoating/painting of parking lots). ***Ms. Cook asked if the public wanted to review the projects funded by ESSER where that information could be obtained. Dr. Stokes shared that Dr. Christy Thompson does a quarterly report at the School Board meetings. Ms. Cook asked if that could be posted to the District's website home page. Ms. Harding said it would be helpful to have instructions posted on how to access BoardDocs. ®***
- FM05 – The 2022-23 school year saw the first clean audit in 20 years in HBGSD. There were zero findings. Dr. Stokes shared that the local audit results and the Annual Financial Report (AFR) are posted on the District website.
- FM06 – A Request for Proposals (RFP) was prepared for a financial advisor; however, since the District cannot currently borrow money, the RFP was not yet issued. Raymond James currently advises the District at no cost.
- FM07 – A debt management policy was put into effect earlier this year.
- FM08 – There is only one (1) vacancy in the Business Office currently. Highly qualified staff have been hired in new roles such as Director of Finance, benefits accountant, and purchasing specialist.
- FM10 – Monitoring and reporting have been improved. A shared Google folder showing Forecast 5 data is available to the Receiver, CRO and Superintendent. The District continues to monitor charter schools and transportation costs.

- R01 – Although unpopular, tax increases are necessary due to the compounding effect. The District was able to allow a zero percent tax increase for 2023-24 due to strong Basic Education Funding and Level Up monies. The fair funding lawsuit is still pending. Level Up funds may not be available in the future.
- R02 – The City of Harrisburg serves as tax collector for the District at 1/3 of the cost. There has been discussion of going to Keystone Collections to improve the collection rate, but there is a desire to maintain goodwill with the City, so this has not been reviewed in earnest at this time.
- R05 – The District receives 75 cents back on every dollar paid into social security on behalf of employees.
- R09 – Windfall revenue (such as ESSER funds) has been spent on priority items such as LED lighting, metal detectors, landscaping, window tinting, carpeting, signage, exterior doors, renovation of the garden level of HVLA, and the John Harris gymnasium floor.
- WF05 – An actuarial study is being conducted on the District’s health care plan to answer questions on how the rate was conceived and to ensure adequate funding. Reconciliation monthly is critical as there was a discrepancy between Highmark’s data vs. the District’s data. ***Dr. Saia asked if the District has ever considered moving to the South-Central Trust.***
- Dr. Willis gave kudos to everyone doing the work in the District. Dr. Suski explained why tax increases are essential to exiting receivership. Dr. Waters indicated that low property values in the city drive the high tax rates. He said that districts like Cumberland Valley raise taxes to the Act 1 index annually. Ms. Harding asked where the fair funding comes in with a District with over 80% Black/Hispanic students. Ms. Cook said the District needs PILOTS (Payments in Lieu of Taxes). Ms. Harding asked if the City has been unfair. Dr. Waters said that LERTAs are tricky. Dr. Saia referenced EITC tax credits which funded \$200,000 for the CAIU’s foundation. Dr. Stokes said that the District has a PILOT with UPMC of \$1 million. Dr. Suski said that

the District is working with a consultant to look at additional PILOT opportunities. Mr. Thompson said that it is important to note that the District does not have a full complement of teachers. Mr. Turman said that there are many working on emergency permits. Dr. Saia said that many paraprofessionals have college credits (toward an A.A. or B.A.) and the CAIU has embarked on a program through Blueboard with work-embedded competencies and a pathway for paras to become certified teachers. There is currently a HBGSD para in that program. Ms. Harding said that coming out with an associate degree would be a good pathway without the debt. Students need to feel supported here.

- The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.
- The next meeting will be held on November 9, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

Harrisburg School District

Act 141 Advisory Committee Meeting

November 9, 2023
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Dr. Sieta Achampong, Melanie Cook, Dr. Marisol Craig, Laura Harding, Beth Light, Michele Rolko, Dr. Andria Saia, Dr. Marcia Stokes, Dr. Lori Suski, Eric Turman, Tim Wendling

Staff: Adam Nornhold

- Dr. Suski welcomed everyone to the meeting and shared that Dr. Waters was out of town.
- Dr. Marisol Craig, Assistant Superintendent, provided a presentation on charter school enrollment, suspension, and attendance data. Below is an overview of the information shared and ***comments from the committee:***
 - John Harris has the highest enrollment in HVLA with the most students coming from 9th grade.
 - ***Dr. Saia asked about Cougar Academy and how many students were part-time virtual, as well as if address verification had been done. She shared that WSSD hired an investigator to verify cyber charter enrollments in their district.***
 - ***Laura Harding asked if climate surveys are conducted to investigate reasons for 9th grade enrollment being so high.***

- Dr. Craig explained that enrollment in HVLA decreased by 258 students from the end of 2022-23 to the start of 2023-24, and Mr. Turman said that many students returned to John Harris after hearing of new leadership. Dr. Craig provided information on the status (location) of those who did not return to HVLA.
- The charter school recapture target was 60 students in 2021-22 and 50 students every year thereafter (per the Recovery Plan).
 - ***Michele Rolko asked if the District can be reimbursed for students who return from charter schools.***
 - ***Dr. Craig explained that the cyber charters invoice the District monthly and verification of enrollment occurs at that time.***
 - ***Dr. Suski asked Dr. Stokes to explain the per pupil calculation for charter school tuition.***
 - ***Melanie Cook recommended lobbying for charter school reform and stated that the public needs to know the costs. Dr. Suski shared that PSBA does lobby on behalf of school boards and that resolutions are passed to express dissatisfaction with the current funding formula.***
- Dr. Craig mentioned the program improvements that have been made to the District's cyber program such as the implementation of a new learning management system, alignment of curriculum, use of District assessments, onsite testing days, support positions added, student orientation, and onsite project days.
- Dr. Craig indicated that charter school enrollment continues to increase from 1,366 students in 2022-23 to 1,405 students in 2023-24.
 - ***Dr. Saia asked why enrollment changed so drastically at Ben Franklin from last year to this year.***
 - ***Laura Harding asked if students must audition to attend CASA.***
 - ***Beth Light asked about Special Education enrollment at charter schools. Dr. Craig confirmed that the District is understaffed in Special Education which may contribute to students exiting to charters.***
 - ***Dr. Saia asked if the District is providing swag.***
 - ***Laura Harding mentioned that some charters encourage students to participate in protests advocating for school choice.***
 - ***Dr. Saia reminded that course completion does not equate to passing.***

- Dr. Craig reviewed student attendance data and said that attendance is taken each period for Grades 6 – 12. Principals get daily attendance notices and Student Attendance Improvement Plans (SAIPs) are written.
 - ***Dr. Saia asked if attendance is tied to Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS).***
 - ***Dr. Craig said that teachers make daily calls, and every school has an attendance team.***
 - ***Michele Rolko indicated that attendance is a challenge at the high school level after Keystone Exams.***
 - ***Dr. Suski said that the District was unsuccessful in finding anyone certified as a Home & School Visitor, so social workers do the majority of follow-up on truant students.***
 - ***Dr. Saia congratulated the team on the significant improvements in student attendance over the past few years.***
 - ***Dr. Craig said that the Office of Student Services has focused a lot on the withdrawal process and 10-day drops for students who did not show up for school at the start of the year, so the data is more accurate.***
 - ***Melanie Cook asked about incentives for attendance. Dr. Craig said that PBIS offers incentives for students with good attendance.***
 - ***Laura Harding suggested a teacher vs. student basketball game.***
 - ***Dr. Suski commented on the high number of absences at John Harris and said that it is indicative of a problem with student engagement.***
 - ***Dr. Saia said that money for career and technical education is needed as well as to address admissions criteria. Culinary Arts and Early Childhood are two programs that could be created in-house. She said that Mike Reed of Penn College of Technology wants to partner with school districts.***

- Dr. Craig reviewed suspension data and action taken to reduce students being excluded from school. The Byrnes Center in York will be doing conflict resolution programming, and Scott Mailen is holding weekly meetings for students transitioning from Hamilton back to John Harris and/or SciTech.
 - ***Melanie Cook said that we need to start earlier because some kids and parents do not care.***

- Having spent the full hour on the presentation/discussion, Dr. Suski said that the quarterly report on the Amended Recovery Plan was emailed to all committee members, and they could contact her with questions.

- The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 14, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. The focus of the meeting will be academic initiatives.
- The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Harrisburg School District

Act 141 Advisory Committee Meeting

December 14, 2023
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Dr. Sieta Achampong, Melanie Cook, Laura Harding, Michele Rolko, Dr. Andria Saia, Eugene Spells, Dr. Marcia Stokes, Dr. Lori Suski, Jim Thompson, Doug Thompson Leader, Eric Turman, Dr. Travis Waters

Staff: Adam Nornhold, Portia Slaughter

Community: Christine Anderson (via Zoom), True Thompson Leader

- Dr. Waters welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Dr. Suski shared that Tim Wendling has resigned from CASA and will no longer be representing the charter school on the Act 141 Advisory Committee. Dr. Saia will need to appoint a replacement from a charter school. Dr. Waters asked for feedback from the committee members as to a recommended replacement. Laura Harding and Melanie Cook suggested that someone from Sylvan Heights Science Charter School be appointed since the school is well-established and they are familiar with Harrisburg School District. The committee agreed with the recommendation.
- Dr. Waters introduced Portia Slaughter, Assistant to the Superintendent, who presented on the academic chapter of the Recovery Plan (see attached presentation). The following questions/comments were posed by the committee in response to the data presented:

- Ms. Slaughter presented District demographics that reflected only .1% Gifted students. She explained the universal screening process and its limitations. ***Dr. Saia discussed the racial bias that is inherent in the tests for Gifted and shared that when in Chester-Upland SD she relied on other criteria, including parent input. Mr. Thompson Leader shared that the Gifted pull-out program takes students out of core instruction and there should be a GIEP to make each student's program individualized.***
- Ms. Slaughter shared Reading/ELA performance data for 2019, 2022 and 2023 (There was no PSSA in 2020 due to COVID. 2021 data was not listed due to low participation during COVID). ***Mr. Thompson said he heard a 15-20% learning loss. Ms. Cook reminded everyone that HBGSD students were out an additional year than others.***
- Ms. Slaughter explained the Beginning of the Year, Middle of the Year, and End of Year STAR data and showed the correlation between PSSA Proficient/Advanced percentages and STAR data. ***Ms. Cook asked if the District drilled down to the teacher level when looking at data. Testing fatigue was mentioned since the STAR data was collected after PSSAs were administered.***
- ***Mr. Thompson commented that parents had the opportunity to retain their children due to COVID and many did not.*** Ms. Slaughter said the research is compelling to not retain. MTSS is better. ***Ms. Harding asked about year-round school or if a hybrid approach was considered for those students who are behind to go year-round.*** Ms. Slaughter explained the challenge of getting students to attend the extended learning opportunities.
- Ms. Slaughter reviewed the Math performance data for elementary, middle, and high school. ***Several committee members expressed grave concern for the low test scores. Ms. Harding suggested a program at HACC that is offered online for students who have a fear of Math ~ Developing Confidence and Skills in Math. Dr. Suski said that many students at HACC must take remedial Math courses before beginning college level Math courses, and this issue is not limited just to HBGSD. Ms. Cook asked if Eureka Math was a good program.*** Ms. Slaughter said that it is a good program for building conceptual understanding of mathematical concepts. ***Dr. Suski mentioned the curriculum audit that has been proposed in the District. Ms. Slaughter referenced the expectations for instruction that have been put in place this year, along with the use of manipulatives when teaching Math.***

- Ms. Slaughter reviewed the 4th and 8th grade Science PSSA and Biology Keystone Exam data. **Ms. Harding asked if Physics is offered at the high school. Mr. Turman said that students who cannot get certain courses are supplementing with dual enrollment courses and the District received a \$75,000 grant for dual enrollment in 2023-24.**
- Ms. Slaughter reviewed the District PVAAS (growth) data and explained the color coding (red, green, blue, and dark blue). Dark blue is where we want students to be. The District is growing students overall. Ms. Slaughter believes this is due to being intentional regarding how things are done. There is a focus on continuous improvement, personalized learning, and instructional leadership. Ms. Slaughter explained the first quarter focus on Tier 1 Instructional Support Model (ISM) and learning walks that occurred in each school. 55.4% of teachers were using District-identified materials during instruction. **Mr. Thompson asked what the other nearly 50% are using.** Ms. Slaughter indicated teacher-selected materials and other free resources available online through “Teachers Pay Teachers” (which is not what we want). **Mr. Turman said that schools that had red data all had significant leadership changes for 2023-24.**
- Ms. Slaughter shared that professional learning has been intentional and focused this year and provided examples such as the Pathways to Proficient Reading course and Writing with Multi-Linguals. She said that the next steps need to be appropriate use of prescribed materials and core instruction, support for lesson planning and transition of instructional time.
- Ms. Harding indicated that she would like to set up a meeting with Dr. Suski and Dr. Waters to share some thoughts about the Math crisis in the District.
- Dr. Waters thanked Ms. Slaughter for the presentation and indicated that at the January 11, 2024 meeting of the committee there would be discussion of the new academic goals.
- The meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.