



MINUTES

Full Board of Directors' Meeting

**June 1, 2021
6:15pm**

The meeting was held:

[Online via Zoom using this link](#)

**Meeting ID: 894 2791 8545
One-tap Mobile: 16699006833,,89427918545#**

MISSION: We exist to foster a diverse and equitable community of youth and adults striving together for academic, personal and civic excellence.

VISION: Inclusive excellence in public education.

The Board uses a series of qualifiers, where appropriate, to help clarify the nature of each presentation/report.

1. The decision has been made and updates are provided (Inform)
2. Input is needed to assist the board to make the best decision (Discussion/Input)
3. Brainstorming is needed to help identify all options (Brainstorm)
4. Input and/or decision is assigned to a Special Committee (Small Group)
5. The decision is ready for vote (Vote)

ATTENDANCE

Board Executive Committee:

Brent Baribeau, Board President
Joe Whitfield, Board Vice President
Marc Furton, Treasurer

Board Members:

Gwen Maurello, Board Member
Brandon Hellwig, Board Member
Kenny Smith, Board Member
Drew Kent, Board Member
Anna Rogers, Board Member

Highline Ex-Officio Members:

Chris Ferris, Highline Academy Executive Director
Sarah Verni-Lau, Highline Academy Southeast Principal
Guerin Gray, Highline Academy Northeast Principal
Brittany Joyce, Highline Director of Communications
Teresa Fraiser, Highline HR Director
Erika Paulino, Highline Academy Southeast Office Manager
Kim Fronapfel, Highline Academy Southeast Teacher

Other:

Stephanie Grossman, HANE parent
Grace Nailing, HASE parent
Candice Fraizer, Virtual Academy teacher

Absent:

Gina Schlieman, Secretary
Ben Garey, Board Member
Leslie Branson, Highline Academy Northeast Teacher
Manda Troutman, Highline Academy Northeast Teacher

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Presenter</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Call to Order – Brent Baribeau – Call to Order (6:19 pm) • Quorum Establish • Agenda Confirm • Mission and Vision restated Quorum established. The agenda was adopted with no changes. Anna Rogers read aloud the mission and vision statement. There are 2 points that stand out to her from our mission. The first is establishing a diverse community, which is important to her because there would be no place for people like herself who come from different countries, cultures, and points of view. Also, civic education is near to her for the importance of having a democracy and freedom.			
Consent Agenda – Brent Baribeau – Governance – Vote (6:21 pm) • Minutes from the April 26, 2021 meeting • Minutes from the May 20, 2021 meeting A motion was made by Brent Baribeau and seconded by Drew Kent to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.			
See BOD Packet for: (6:22 pm) • Notes for SAC • K-2 Reading / Language Selection • Staff Culture Reports • HR Review FY 2020-2021 • FY 2021 Budget to Actuals • FY 2021 Revised Budget Resolution • Kamrin Coffey Board application, resume, interview responses			
Public Comment (6:22 pm) Stephanie Grossman, joining to observe the Board as a Board candidate. Grace Nailing, joining to observe the Board as a Board candidate.			
Executive Director Update - Chris Ferris - Inform (6:23 pm) Staff culture feedback and work of the Be The Change Committee • Becoming one Highline is a goal in our strategic plan. Improving staff culture and creating alignment between the two campuses is very important to the organization. • Staff completed two surveys this year to provide insight into staff culture. The Insight survey was taken in December 2020, and the Promise54 survey was taken in March 2021. Staff also participated in campus feedback sessions in April 2021. • HANE Staff Culture - Areas for growth: Performance Evaluations and Coaching, Inclusive Culture, Hiring and Onboarding, Benefits and Compensation • Performance Evaluations and Coaching: We heard from staff at HANE that the current performance evaluations are not comprehensive, or at least are not fully understood, by all educators. We heard that staff would like a stronger connection between the expectations of the evaluation and how professional development and coaching is done, as well as greater consistency in both how evaluations are conducted and in coaching. • Inclusive Culture: Some people do not feel safe to fully share their opinions and concerns and people of color within the organization feel even less heard. • Hiring and Onboarding: Perceptions about hiring are mixed. While staff see an increase in people of color joining Highline and most of them would recommend Highline to a friend from a marginalized background, we also heard concerns that our recruiting and hiring process may hold unintentional bias. We also heard that our onboarding process for new employees did not go as well this year, in a fully virtual process, than in past years. We look forward to returning to a fully in person onboarding for 21-22.			

- **Benefits/Compensation:** The Promise 54 data indicates that people generally believe the compensation and bonus structures are fair and clear: However, there is still concern about our being competitive in salary with other schools/districts. It also seems that flexibility both in using PTO and in managing their non-teaching time (such as after school) matters a lot to staff. There is a balance to be struck between the high demands for student supervision and staff interest in flexibility. Improving communication about what it means to be a charter school and how that impacts our calendar, benefits and budget is also important.
- Brent Baribeau asked if we have done an audit to compare staff salaries to other schools within the district and compared to other charter schools. The Colorado League of Charter Schools conducted an audit in 2019 and stated that Highline is within the range of other schools. Highline's compensation is based on a salary scale. Brent suggested that we analyze the salary scale at other districts annually and present the data to the Board. Brandon Hellwig shared that having this transparency with staff would be a good idea.
- **HASE Staff Culture Areas for Improvement:** Performance Evaluation, Teacher Input, Recruiting and Onboarding, Lack of Trust/Understanding with Network Team, Peer Staff Culture.
- **Performance Evaluation:** Teachers believe that the expectations for good teaching are clearly defined, but the evaluation system is only satisfying to about half of the staff. Coaching, on the other hand, seems to have been dramatically impacted by the pandemic. Whereas last year many teachers scored coaching very high, this has decreased this current year. The perception of a disconnect between the performance evaluation and people advancing in the organization, receiving appropriate compensation or being non-renewed is a trend over two years. In addition most people of color do not believe that advancement is happening for all people equally; while most white people do not see a disparity in advancement.
- **Teacher Input:** A high number of teachers report that they are consulted about decisions that impact them but they express a lower level of belief that their input has enough value. The decline over the two years from 81% to 62% also seems to indicate that the type of structure that was imposed this year due to the pandemic and health guidance impacted staff's feeling of control over their working conditions. They also expressed questions about fairness in treating all employees equally. Although some of the concerns will be naturally alleviated by school returning to normal, Highline should always strive for transparency and fairness in decision making.
- **Recruiting and Onboarding:** Staff do see an increase in bringing in diverse candidates, although there is still room for improvement. A high number of staff would recommend Highline to a friend from a marginalized background and no one thinks people of color leave the organization due to issues of bias. On the other hand, staff wonder if there could be even more done to recruit diverse candidates and improve our interview process. The onboarding process was seen as fairly successful prior to the pandemic but has not worked as well in the all virtual world. An interest in some support that extends beyond the New Teacher Institute was also expressed.
- **Lack of Understanding / Trust with the Network Team:** While the majority of staff believe that the school leaders have clear priorities and report they respect their direct manager, there is a more mixed response about the leadership team having clear strategy and whether it is high functioning. This combined with the comments from staff at HASE indicate that there is a sense of disconnect and less confidence with the larger organizational leadership than there is with the school level administration.
- **Peer Staff Culture:** There is evidence to show that people are working well together in that they generally feel they are able to contribute in meetings, they see each other as highly effective, and that the culture respects and values differences. However, some indications suggest that people might be struggling to work through disagreements or might feel that minority views are not as welcome. The level of trust between staff is surprisingly low given some of the other indicators and could be linked to the challenges expressed about communicating across differences.
- Marc Furton asked why compensation may not have come up at HASE compared to HANE. Reasons could be because there are more tenured staff at HASE; HASE staff valuing the school experience beyond compensation; more special education staff at HANE who are eligible for higher bonuses.
- **Be the Change committee:** A cross campus committee of six teachers and three administrators, along with the Network team, worked with Promise54 this year to research and analyze staff culture through an equity lens. The committee will continue next year to develop a 3-year action plan that will focus on the following based on the results from staff surveys and feedback sessions:
 - Hiring - examining it for bias and revising it accordingly

- The evaluation system - creating a Highline “professionalism” standard, making suggestions to improve consistency and reliability
- Staff culture - supporting transparency, communication and fostering relationship building
- Brent Baribeau asked about our partnership with Promise54. They are a national consulting firm that advises nonprofits on creating more inclusive, equitable and diverse work cultures. We began our partnership with Promise54 in April 2020 and our last consultation meeting will be in June 2021. The goal was to develop a 3-year action plan to drive positive change, with the coaching, programming and guidance from Promise54.
- Chris Ferris shared that we grew and learned together through this project. However, this work is hard and is not a linear process compared to other efforts.

New Reading Curriculum for K-2

- Highline created a cross-campus committee to select a new reading curriculum that is on the approved list from the CDE. The state is pressuring all schools to adopt one of their approved reading curricula that was selected because it is based on new scientific research on how to best teach reading. Highline’s former reading program, Reach, does not meet the scientific criteria. The state may withhold funding to schools that do not adopt one of the approved programs.
- The formation of the selection committee was in response to changes to the Colorado READ Act; a need to integrate phonics with the reading curriculum; and providing students with core reading concepts in the tier one curriculum to reduce the need for intervention services.
- The reading-selection committee consisted of 3 HANE teachers, 4 HASE teachers, 1 virtual academy teacher, 1 assistant principal from each campus supporting K-2, and the ED. The committee began meeting in February 2021 and in May chose the program after establishing a rubric to rate the different options, deep curricula study, teacher interviews, using sample units in classrooms, and research of training, implementation support and costs.
- The committee used the following criteria for evaluating reading curriculum: culturally responsive, promoted student engagement, teacher experience, included student assessment and differentiation, writing instruction, and reading skills.
- The committee selected [Benchmark Workshop](#) after their extensive selection process. Teachers felt the lessons were engaging to students, rigorous, adaptive to different student needs, and comprehensive; providing connected lessons across phonics, comprehension, and writing.
- After 5 years the curriculum will cost \$54,913 for HANE, and \$42,217 for HASE (multi-year agreements provide savings of ~\$5,000 in year 2 and 3). Professional development / training will cost \$8,400. Will be presenting to the Finance committee to review the expenditure. Wanted to bring before the Board to show the due diligence in selecting a curriculum that was on the approved list by CDE

HR Update - Teresa Frasier - Inform (7:03 pm)

End of year hiring & retention update

- HASE staff statistics: 55% are white females, 14% are white males, 12% are Hispanic females, and 11% are black females. Other categories are 3% or less.
- HANE staff statistics: 54% are white females, 14% are Hispanic females, 11% are white males, 8% are females of 2 or more races. Other categories are 5% or less.
- Staff retention grew YOY for the organization, from 81% to 85%.
- HASE retention for POC was 91% and 95% for HANE.
- The top reasons staff indicated for leaving this year included: moving out of Colorado due to cost of living; compensation and benefits; personal reasons not having to do with the organization; health of family member or self; virtual academy position elimination.
- Existing staff rated the working environment highly (4), however rated the quality of communication low (2) on a scale of 1 - 5, with 5 being the highest rating.
- Highline’s staff turnover rate (14.79%) is lower than the National average for K-12 schools (16%) and the Colorado average for K-12 schools (17.7%).
- There are only a few positions to fill across the campuses as we head into June, with several of these

positions being new additions for the 2021-22 school year.

- Highline was committed to not have teachers teach students both remotely and in-person. However, schools that did had turnover rates of 44%

Principal Update - Sarah Verni-Lau & Guerin Gray - Inform (7:12 pm)

End of Year Summary- highlights: what went well

- Met with SAC committee at both campuses around end of year STAR data. There was an interesting spread in the data, though it looks much better than anticipated from the start of the school year. Noticed tremendous catch up growth for students who were struggling at the beginning of the year, as well as students who greatly benefited from being in-person for the second half of the year.
- Teacher retention rate was a huge success. Received a lot of positive feedback around teachers having only one content area and being able to hone in. They felt successful in this model and will continue this into 2021-22.
- Anti-racism work: dedicated half of the professional development time to this work this year. Teachers were able to volunteer to lead conversations within staff groups. Teacher voice was prominent in how these groups were structured and operated. Revamped curriculum to become even more culturally responsive.
- The community connection grew this year despite not being able to meet at school. Families felt the communication was improved and had more involvement. Families were able to see their child's classroom experience first-hand and appreciated this opportunity.
- Social-emotional learning was a success, being able to meet student needs in the midst of hardships students faced in and out of the classroom and had individualized needs.

Biggest challenges for 21-22

- 8th grade graduation showed how urgent community connection will be for next year. Families who have been at Highline for 9 years were able to see one another for the first time, and it was moving.
- Managing influx of technology devices (had half of the current inventory prior to the pandemic). Considering the impact technology has had on student learning, and the role it can play in the classroom.
- Planning to screen each child at the beginning of the school year to understand where they are and to develop individualized plans to support student learning.
- Drew Kent asked if parents will be able to come into the building. Guerin Gray explained that this policy was the result of adhering to district policy for 2020-21. We are hopeful that parents will be able to
- Drew Kent asked about summer work for students, and Guerin Gray confirmed that summer work was sent home with students. We are also hosting a summer program at both campuses due to a grant we received. This program is meant to support students who would benefit most due to learning loss.

Finance Committee – Marc Furton – Fiscal Oversight – Vote (7:28 pm)

Budget to Actuals April

- Not a lot of changes since last month.
- Highline's debt service coverage ratio is projected to end the fiscal year at 2.77, double the 1.10 ratio threshold as defined by the loan covenant.
- Cash on hand is projected to be 129 days, double the 60 days requirement.
- The Southeast campus has 4.3 months cash on hand and the Northeast campus has 2.61 months.
- Below budget for capital expenditures, projecting to end the fiscal year at \$331,713.
- On track with revenues (82% to budget) and expenses (80% to budget). Have a surplus at both campuses (\$53k at HASE, \$560k at HANE).

Pass final 20-21 budget resolution

- A motion was made by Brent Baribeau and seconded by Joe Whitfield to approve the final 2020-21 budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Political Advocacy - Kenny Smith - Inform (7:33 pm)

Need for increased charter school advocacy

- Denver has become a less charter friendly place.
- DPS transitions (superintendent, OSRI) and recent Board actions have signaled a shift away from the

support of autonomous schools have enjoyed in recent years.

- Recent state legislation introduced (i.e. HB 1295) signaled further belt tightening at the expense of charter schools.
- It is increasingly important that we are positioned to advocate for our schools and identify and cultivate allies. We need to be proactive and on the offense.
- We are partnering with a 501(c)4 organization named Denver Families for Public Schools and the Colorado League of Charter Schools to work on organizing community support for charters, including cultivating potential school board candidates for the upcoming election. The League is launching a partnership for charter school leaders to develop an organized committee to push back on policy changes.
- Highline is up for renewal in 2022 (both campuses), so we will need to be prepared to share our successes in academics and in diversity, equity and inclusion as we face a more hostile Board. Each campus will provide proof and documentation for their renewal (while at the same time, each campus will be evaluated separately).
- Brent Baribeau asked what matters with advocacy and how should we focus our efforts? Writing a letter to the new Superintendent? to the DPS Board? Chris Ferris said it will be important to build relationships with DPS Board members and share stories of the work we are doing. We need to work hard to have high family turnout for the DPS Board vote. Another is to submit prepared letters that the League puts together to show support (or disapproval) for certain pieces of legislation. Over 50k community members signed the prepared letter to urge legislators to vote against SB 1295. The community has not been galvanized to turn out in off cycle elections, however more community members support school choice than not.
- Chris Ferris wanted to know if the Board felt comfortable with Highline being affiliated with City Action Fund, which is a new c4. As a 501(c)(3), Highline cannot take a stance on how the community should vote or be aligned politically. However, c4 organizations can. No one on the Board expressed any concern with this partnership.

Reach In - Brent Baribeau - Governance - Inform (8:01 pm)

Update on ED evaluation

- We are tracking to complete the ED evaluation this month. Will be talking to her direct reports and looking at the mid-year opportunities that were identified. The Executive Director evaluation will be discussed during Executive session on June 21.

Board candidate updates and candidate vote

- Candidate update: We received several Board candidates for the 2021-2022 school year, with more interest than in previous years. We are very excited about the breadth of experiences and backgrounds they could bring to Highline. The REACH IN committee is vetting candidates and which to present to the Board for a vote at the June 21st meeting.
- The REACH IN committee brings to the Board Kamrin Coffey, a candidate for consideration to join the Board of Directors. Kamrin is a community member who is interested in joining out REACH Out committee and brings solid experience in fundraising, marketing, community outreach, publicity, and DEI. She presented strong energy around our mission and is eager to support our initiatives, which was refreshing and would be an asset to our group.
- A motion was made by Brent Baribeau and seconded by Drew Kent to vote Kamrin Coffey to the Highline Academy Board of Directors for a 3-year term. The motion passed unanimously.

2021-22 Board Officer nominations

- Gina Schlieman is stepping down from Board Secretary. Now living in Norway, it is a challenge to attend Board meetings when they occur in the early hours of the morning. However, she would still like to be involved with Highline and the REACH In committee is discussing with her to be the chair of the REACH In committee (as her expertise is in policy and governance) and to be a member of the REACH Up committee.
- Brent Baribeau nominates himself to continue the role of Board President for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Brent Baribeau nominates Gwen Maurello and Joe Whitfield to be co- vice chair / co- vice president starting the 2021-2022 school year.
- Anna Rogers self-nominates to assume the role of Board Secretary for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Marc Furton self- nominates to continue the role of Board Treasurer for the 2021-2022 school year..
- Brent Baribeau asked the Board to consider which committee they would like to be a part of for 2021-22 as

we consider the composition of committees with new members coming onto the Board.

Old Business - Brent Baribeau - Inform (8:12 pm)

None

Reminders/Announcements - Brent Baribeau - Inform (8:13 pm)

Next Full BOD meeting:

- Monday, June 21, 2021
- Board retreat: Friday, July 30, 2021 (10am to 4pm; in-person if possible; lunch will be provided)

Adjournment - Brent Baribeau - End Meeting - Vote (8:20 pm)

With no further business up for discussion, a motion was made by Brent Baribeau and seconded by Joe Whitfield to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.