



MINUTES

Full Board of Directors Meeting

October 25, 2021
6:15pm

The meeting was held:

[Online via Zoom using this link](#)

Dial-in Number: 1-253-215-8782,,86719482264#

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
Gwen Maurello, Co-Chair
Joe Whitfield, Co-Chair
Marc Furton, Treasurer
Anna Rogers, Secretary

Board Members:

Kamrin Coffey, Board Member
Ben Garey, Board Member
Stephanie Grossman, Board Member
Brandon Hellwig, Board Member
Drew Kent, Board Member
Grace Nailing, Board Member
Kenny Smith, 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
Heather Miles, Southeast Campus Teacher
Leah Gerig, Northeast Campus Teacher

Other:

Stephanie Leigh, Southeast Campus Parent
Kelsey Leachko, DPS PMT Representative
Elizabeth Stamberger, DPS PMT Representative
Tyler Baier, Level Field

Absent:

Austin Young, Northeast Campus Teacher

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Presenter</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Call to Order – Brent Baribeau – Call to Order (6:18 pm) • Quorum Establish • Agenda Confirm • Mission and Vision restated Board Chair Brent Baribeau called the meeting to order and welcomed members of the DPS Portfolio Management Team who were observing as a part of the Southeast Campus charter renewal. A quorum of the Board was established. The agenda was adopted with one change: to include an update on the Black Excellence Resolution Plans. Kamrin Coffey read aloud the mission and vision statement. She explained that at Highline, we are committed to listening to teachers, students and families. We are invested in building community and helping all students succeed.			
Consent Agenda – Brent Baribeau – Governance – Vote (6:20 pm) • September 28, 2021 meeting A motion was made by Brent Baribeau and seconded by Joe Whitfield to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.			
See BOD Packet for: (6:20 pm) • October 2021 Enrollment Counts • Campus UIPs; Cross Campus Alignment • REACH Up report; STAR Data • 2020 Audit; October 2021 Financials; Proposed Fundraising Policy • Feasibility Study for HASE facility expansion project			
Public Comment (6:21 pm) There was no public comment.			
Executive Director Update - Chris Ferris - Inform (6:21 pm) Update on October Count for 2021-22 • The Southeast campus October count came in at 522, just under the 528 budget. Given shifting demographics in Southeast Denver and declining enrollment around Denver, this is a success. This determines our funding for the rest of the year. This is another reason we are pursuing bringing on an ECE program at our Southeast campus, as it provides a pipeline for enrollment into Kindergarten and beyond. • The Northeast campus October count came in at 550, over the 536 budget. HANE is in an enrollment zone and is not affected by the demographic shifts like at HASE. DPS Board Election • We have created a webpage where the community can check their registration status, register and pledge to vote. We hosted a town hall event on October 20th to allow families an opportunity to learn more about what it means to be a charter school, why this election matters, where they can learn more about candidates, and ask questions. Sending out mailers including a QR code that shows drop box locations. Highline continues to only share the importance of voting and not endorsing any particular candidate or political party. • The election is November 2, 2021 and the outcome will have a major impact on our program and students. Please get informed and vote. Black Excellence Plans • Root causes, goals, and action plans were presented in this Black Excellence presentation (click here). • In the last Board meeting on September 28th, the Board established a vision statement of: In partnership with families, Highline will create an environment that will empower all Black students to Reach In, Reach Up, and Reach Out so they can fully realize their academic and personal excellence by 2025. • Highline hosted a Black Excellence Roundtable on October 11th with families where they had an			

opportunity to see student data and share their thoughts on how we can improve.

- Guerin Gray explained that families appreciated the approach of empowering students during conferences and there was higher engagement among families.
- Joe Whitfield liked the fact that his children brought home a portfolio about what they are learning and the goals they have for the year.
- Drew Kent asked how data will be tracked and it was confirmed that it will be disaggregated so that the school can see progress within subgroups.
- Highline is looking at different ways of increasing family engagement and access, including recorded videos with information about student data and progress.
- Next steps:
 - Interview HASE students and finalize the action plan for the 3rd root cause at HASE
 - Share the Black Excellence Plan with DPS on October 30, 2021
 - Report on Culturally Responsive Teaching curriculum changes at Parents for DEI meeting on Nov 6 meeting
 - Share plan with Black Excellence Family Roundtable on November 9

Principal Update - Guerin Gray and Sarah Verni-Lau- Inform (6:40 pm)

One Highline Goal: Alignment of student expectations and teaching expectations shared

Areas of Cross Campus Alignment

- Instructional Focus
 - Professional development, peer collaboration, and personalized coaching on key indicators from teacher evaluation at Highline.
- Academic Alignment
 - Collaboration on “essential standards” at each grade level for all content areas
 - Common rubrics across campus for essential standards (same expectations across campuses)
 - Common conditions for assessment for essential standards at each campus
- Behavioral Systems: Collaboration on classroom environment, rituals and routines
 - Leveraging the strengths and expertise of teachers
- Problem of Practice
 - Small group meetings focused on actual issues that teachers are facing in their practice
 - Cross campus groups based on types of problems

Timeline

- Five to eight week cycles throughout the year, with each cycle having different professional development and essential standard focus
- There are two cross-campus PDs each cycle
- Each cycle includes:
 - Baseline observations of all classrooms at each campus
 - Professional development aligned to cycle goal based on observations
 - Coaching aligned to PD goal
 - Problem of practice based on areas of focus
 - Data collection on essential standard
 - Collaboration on teaching and learning of essential standard across campuses
- Highline has just begun the 2nd cycle.
- The Admin team is meeting weekly to discuss best practices and foster cross-campus collaboration and alignment.
- Kenny Smith inquired about how staff dynamics are with the cross-campus PDs and building trust. Sarah Verni-Lau explained that the Admin team began with the indicator around the learning environment, which created a level playing field for teachers. There is no expert on which campus is performing better in this area, and as a result there was no tension. Teachers are rolling out a new literacy curriculum that is being

adopted at both campuses and being led by a cross-campus committee. There are natural collaboration points cross campus based on the individuals in small group meetings as well.

- The Admin team wanted to make sure there was not an adversarial or competitive relationship. Instead of comparing outputs, seeking comparison of standards and what success means. This moves the focus away from who is doing what better and what is the ultimate goal for kids. Encouraging teachers to bring experiences and collaborate for shared learning. Teachers look forward to working cross-campus and are learning so much by approaching things in new ways.

Unified Improvement Plans (UIPs) & targets

- The UIPs are public documents and have been shared with the state. They have shifted a bit since the last Board meeting as the result of new data analysis, yet fairly aligned to the last version.
- Drew Kent inquired if there has been much change from beginning to mid-year assessments. Sarah Verni-Lau said we are attempting to progress monitor more than 3 times a year going forward in order to better assess student progress and make action plans.
- Kenny Smith asked of all the things in the UIP, what are a few things that the Admin team would like to elevate to bring to the Board. Guerin Gray said he is most excited that there is a plan for all parts of the UIP at this time of the year, with clear goals and areas to focus on.
- Guerin Gray said the UIP deadline of October 15 was very challenging this year, especially with restarting in-person learning. Knowing this will be the new deadline (up from April as in years past), it will be easier to anticipate and make a plan to meet the deadline with greater ease. The UIP has become more of a planning document to drive change and growth for the year. It aligns with the data cycle. It is a significant benefit for having a roadmap at this earlier part of the year to guide focus areas and goal setting. Seeing the first round of data is reaffirming; once we meet the conditions we need, student growth will ensue.

Reach Up - Gwen Maurello - Inform (7:01 pm)

Readout on current STAR Data

- STAR assesses: Early Literacy (K-2); Reading (3-8); and Math(K-8).
- HANE Highlights
 - Testing was from August to September 13th
 - Staffing challenges affected intervention time
 - Major changes to intervention have occurred since then. We look forward to November testing to see how these changes may help improve conditions.
 - If growth is at 1.5 years, the majority of students will be on level.
 - 50% of students met or exceeded expectations on the Reading and math assessments across grade levels.
 - All grades realized growth in math with an average of 2 months.
- HASE Highlights
 - Testing occurred from August to the week of October 4th
 - Data reflects effective interventions
 - Analyzing individual student data shows adequate and consistent growth and catch up growth
 - 70% of students met or exceeded expectations on the reading and math assessments across grade levels.
 - All grades realized growth in reading (8th grade at the highest with 8 months) and in math (7th grade at the highest with 1 year and 1 month of growth).
 - Many students are coming to Highline from remote learning programs, which has created changes in foundational learning among our body of students.

Finance Update - Marc Furton - Vote (7:25 pm)

September 2021 Budget to Actuals

- Financial statements were presented.

- Budget to Actuals are in line with the baseline (25%).
- Debt service coverage ratio and days of cash on hand are expected to be above the stated requirements at the end of FY 2022.
- Some expenses are currently over budget because some expenses were approved after the original budget (like new curriculum).
- PPR revenues at both campuses are expected to be higher than the original budget due to conservative PPR revenue increase when the original budget was passed.

2020-21 Audit Results

- No audit comments/findings, no audit adjustments and no passed adjustments.
- A clean (unqualified) audit opinion was issued.
- The audit report includes both Fund and Government Wide financial statements, as required. Reconciliation of the fund to government-wide fund balance/net assets was also presented.
- Accounting policies are presented in Footnote 1.
- Capital Assets are presented in Note 4 and were reviewed.
- Long term debts and pension liability was reviewed (note 5).
- New Item: A Single Audit was also performed for FY 2021, as the Covid relief funding increased our total federal funding above the threshold to require this additional audit. As part of the Single Audit, the Coronavirus Relief Funds were selected and audited for compliance with the requirements of the Coronavirus Relief Funds program. There were no findings identified during the Single Audit.

Vote on the Audit Report:

- A motion was made by Marc Furton and seconded by Ben Garey to approve the 2020-2021 audit. The motion passed unanimously.

Reach In - Brent Baribeau - Vote (7:38 pm)

Fundraising Policy

- The proposed updates to the fundraising policy include having a form to submit requests for approvals (for staff and Parents with Purpose (PWP)).
- The intent of the policy update is to ensure that the activity produces a reasonable return, specifically if a vendor is contracted to support fundraising efforts. Proposing that the vendor's share from dollars raised shall not exceed 20%. Parents and community members need assurance that their donation is going to the school; we seek to be transparent with our community and not realize diminishing returns with high shares going to vendors.
- It is unclear how the 20% was decided on; it was proposed and discussed by the Finance committee. It is not a material change, however it provides guardrails.
- The forms are not created to set up barriers for organizers; they organize the activity so it is clear how funds raised will be applied. The updated language was reviewed by the Finance and Reach Up committees.
- A motion was made by Brent Baribeau and seconded by Kamrin Coffey to update the Fundraising Policy in section 18.0 of the Financial Policy. The motion passed unanimously.

Building Corporation - Tyler Baier and Chris Ferris - Inform (7:45 pm)

Update on financial feasibility study with Level Field

Level Field was contacted to conduct a financial feasibility analysis of the Southeast campus facility expansion project.

- What was presented are the closest estimates Level Field could derive taking all the assets, debt and current market conditions into consideration.
- Pro-bono review and recommendation was completed by the Wye River Group (WRG), a trusted financial advisor, in order to pressure test assumptions regarding debt capacity and likely financing options.
- Current Highline debt looks good taking into account the low interest rate. The school can also stretch the

payments into 25-35 year terms. Highline can refinance its debt; the penalty for early payment will not be charged since it expires in December. Current rates are very favorable. Highline has good credit; it improved in the last 2 years. Both campuses will be used to secure the financing, even though the project is only for the Southeast campus.

- Enrollment projections were reviewed.
- Projected liquidity was reviewed - 90 days of cash is very good.
- Debt service coverage is very strong.

Financial Capacity Recommendation

- Both Wye River Group and Level Field agree that Highline has a total debt capacity for the HASE facility expansion project and current debt refinance of ~\$15MM to \$15.5MM.
- Due to Highline's operating history, strong cash position and financial projections, the school is a likely candidate for a more attractive Bank Issued Bond product or a Municipal Bond public offering.
- The markets are very volatile so if/when Highline goes to market, we might be in a different condition.
- Highline will need an underwriter, financial advisors, etc. Or Highline can go directly to the banks. If the school uses the current bank, this will help to reduce interest by 0.01%.
- The \$500,000 needed for additional financing will come either from cash or by fundraising. This will help the project.

Risk: Covid relief will expire in 2-3 years that is why there is a cliff on the financial model.

Highline has the capacity to expand, however there is a risk because of the volatility of the construction market. There is a good opportunity to refinance the debt at better terms.

There is large fundraising potential coming up with the 20th anniversary of the school. The facility expansion project will bring some excitement and may help with the challenges of enrolling new students. Middle school has a solid program and it should be housed in a facility that is as great as the program is.

Interest rates will go up since we are at an all time low. Level Field recommends doing this project within 3-6-9 months. Waiting for another year will result in higher construction costs and potentially higher interest rates.

We received 2 grants in support of this project. One was already used for the master project with Ratio. The second grant will be used for schematic designs. Schematic design is still a design project, not the actual building. This is required to secure the loan. The Board needs to approve the move toward the schematic design.

Board approval will be required to secure the loan later in the process. The loan can be procured after schematic design and cost estimates have been completed. However, the school can secure the initial proposal and obtain a rating with S&P or Moody.

Schematic Design - Ratio was selected through a competitive bidding process. Ben Garey suggests that we use them for this project so the school can keep the institutional knowledge gained and the relationship built.

Ben Garey made a motion to approve the schematic design from Ratio, Joe Whitfield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ben Garey made a motion to solicit a Capital Campaign consultant. Kamrin Coffey second the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

For bringing on an ECE program at the Southeast campus, Highline has begun initial talks with a local church (BridgeWay) to rent out their space. If we are successful, the ECE program can potentially begin starting the 2022-2023 school year. We can launch the ECE program in the church and then move it to the Southeast campus building in time. There will be separation between church and state (i.e. signs removed). It is a very common

practice to use a church's facility for a school's ECE program.

All the contracts will be brought to the Board's attention before moving with the official contracts.

Reach Out - Ben Garey - Inform (8:25 pm)

Board fundraising & fundraising goals for 2021-22

- Ben Grey shared the current Board fundraising total (\$4,725) and the goal that was pledged at the beginning of the school year (\$9,190). Ben encouraged the Board to lead by example as the leadership of the school.
- Highline received a \$5,000 grant from a Reach Out volunteer through a contribution from her employer.
- Colorado Gives Day is December 7, 2021 and we will have three ways for the community to show their support:
 - General operating fund to support the Highline network (both campuses)
 - Northeast campus messaging to increase access to after school enrichment programs
 - Southeast campus messaging to support new outdoor eating infrastructure

Old Business - Brent Baribeau- Inform (8:29 pm)

Guerin Gray extended a personal thanks to Stephanie Grossman, Joe Whitfield and Drew Kent for attending the Northeast Campus Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 23rd.

Reminders/Announcements - Brent Baribeau - Inform (8:30pm)

- Next BOD meeting: December 3, 2021 at 8am via Zoom [here](#)

Adjournment - Brent Baribeau - Adjourn Meeting - Vote (8:31 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.