



MINUTES

Full Board of Directors' Meeting

**December 14th, 2020
6:15pm**

The meeting was held:

[Online via Zoom using this link](#)

Meeting ID: 772 3141 9037

One-tap mobile number: 1.346.248.7799,,77231419037#

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
Eric Neumann, Co-Treasurer
Marc Furton, Co-Treasurer
Gina Schlieman, Secretary

Board Members:

Ben Garey, Board Member
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
Leslie Branson, Highline Academy Northeast Teacher
Manda Troutman, Highline Academy Northeast Teacher
Erika Paulino, Highline Academy Southeast Office Manager
Kim Fronapfel, Highline Academy Southeast Teacher

Other:

Rachel Langberg, Highline Academy Northeast Assistant Principal
Carolyn Gallegos, Highline Academy Southeast Assistant Principal
Abby Arriaga, Highline Academy Northeast Assistant Principal
Victor Arriaga, Highline Northeast Parent
Matthew Griebel, Highline Southeast Parent
Courtney Fry, Highline Southeast Teacher
Natalie Neuhart, Highline Southeast Teacher
Katie Netherton, Highline Southeast Teacher
Rebecca Farnsworth, Highline Southeast Teacher
Megan Musgrave, Highline Southeast Teacher
Roxana Perez, Highline Southeast Teacher
Abbie Wessel, Highline Southeast Parent
Heather Miles, Highline Southeast Teacher
Amy Shoukas, Highline Southeast Parent
Jenna , Highline Southeast Teacher
Stephanie Leigh, Highline Southeast Parent
Whitney Noven, Highline Southeast Parent
Caitlin Murray, Highline Southeast Parent
Elly Havel, Highline Southeast Teacher
Candice Frazier, Highline Southeast Teacher
Katie Romerso, Highline Southeast Parent

Absent:

n/a

<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 one change - to allow the new DEI committee to present and for the REACH Up committee to present as a part of the Principal update. Eric Neumann read aloud the mission and vision statement as tribute to his last meeting. His family has had a wonderful experience at Highline and the school has made a big difference in their growth. When his children came to Highline, they were being challenged compared to the neighborhood schools from where they came. It was a new experience to be a part of the Board and it has been valuable. He will always treasure and appreciate it.			
Consent Agenda – Brent Baribeau – Governance – Vote (6:32 pm) • Minutes from the October 26, 2020 meeting A motion was made by Brent Baribeau and seconded by Brandon Hellwig to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.			
See BOD Packet for: (6:34 pm) • Feedback from Staff and Parents on Strategic Plan • HASE and HANE reports on academics, engagement and attendance • November Financials • REACH In Meeting Notes • REACH Up Report and Star Data			
Public Comment (6:35 pm) Heather Miles, Highline Southeast teacher: Thanks the Board for making the best decision for Highline in the fall when switching back to remote learning. The continuity for learning makes a difference. If we go back and forth, it is a stress on staff, families and students. Having consistency is important for learning. Caitlin Murray, Highline Southeast parent: Love the mission and the values. She understands the choice to be in-person or remote is a difficult decision. Attending remotely has not helped her child, and it will be important for him to attend school in-person next semester to support social-emotional needs. His teachers and staff have been incredible.			
Executive Director Update - Chris Ferris - Inform (6:43 pm) Discussion of the return to in person learning that DPS has announced and what Highline's plan should be. Although DPS announced that they will go back to in-person learning on January 11, 2021, Highline's leaders are also in conversations with the other school districts to discuss key data points and leaning on data instead of DPS for Highline's decision making. Highline reached out to public health officials for guidance, and the leader of 520 High School who has a doctorate in public health. More data has been coming out that schools are not a center for transmission. However, when there is a high infection rate in the community, schools are impacted. Chris shared a model that helps show the number of cases within a school based on the number of cases in the community. Currently we do not have a final recommended course of action for Highline; however, school leaders are working on a roll out plan to phase in students by grade level. As cases rise, Highline may need to adjust in-person learning accordingly. Highline will share the final plan within the coming weeks. Board discussion on the matter: Gina Schlieman, who is an education consultant, has spoken with several leaders about their plans and approach. She is pleased that Highline took the position to align with DPS at the start of the year and have all students in remote learning, which made it an easier transition for staff and families. She understands the need for younger learners to receive instruction in-person and acknowledges staff concerns. She would be in favor of a more assertive plan to prioritize 3rd grade and below return to in-person once cases go back down, and maintain a protocol that isolates cases or exposed cohorts, but resumes in person following.			

Kenny Smith, also an education consultant, has met with clients who are going back as early as next week and into 2021. There are a range of perspectives and experiences. There is a body of evidence that supports bringing in our youngest learners. However, there is a need to balance that with what would be best for our community and take the scenario of the two communities into consideration. Highline should not feel that we should be beholden to what DPS does. Highline should hear from our community and come up with a decision that would best meet the needs of our students and families. There is no simple answer and many networks and districts are grappling with the same challenge. School leaders need to be firm and nimble about that would be best for Highline.

Drew Kent remarked that he is a better student in person, though he is working hard remotely. Though he acknowledges that it would not be advantageous for students to go back in person if there is a chance that virtual learning would need to resume again. Change is not beneficial for student learning, and would struggle with having to go back to remote if staff and students are still getting sick.

Ben Garey agrees with the idea to make a plan that is in the best interest of the campus and families. Whatever is decided, Highline needs to stick to it and adhere to a metric that guides our decisions.

Gwen Maurello echoes this sentiment of having consistency and determining how long we need to remain within the established threshold.

Erika Paulino, board teacher rep, believes that schools are spread thin having to handle all the requirements. The limitations were great when we were in person for a few weeks in the fall. She agrees about having a plan to bring in our youngest learners, but we should keep middle school remote. Agrees that we should navigate the decision by campus and not as a network, as well as having metrics to guide our decision.

Sarah Verni-Lau describes two paths: getting students back in quickly (does not recognize the reality of the virus saturation situation at that point in time) which comes at the expense of longevity. The 2nd path is to hold for a plan that supports longevity. It makes it easier to wait when we know we are at the point to safely be in person consistently.

Leslie Branson shared that there is a lot of fear and anxiety for teachers when in person. They worry about their health and safety.

Manda Troutman hears different opinions from different teachers. For young kids, they express how hard it is to work with their students remotely and measure success. Teachers for older students find it hard to manage classrooms and the number of students that they might have when in-person resumes. Her students are worried about transmission and contracting COVID, or giving it to someone in their family.

Staff and parent feedback on the strategic plan

- What excites staff most: Becoming more inclusive/anti-racist; a middle school for HANE; an ECE for HASE; increasing staff diversity; more collaboration between the two campuses; building stronger community/communication with families; defining our academic goals; creating a dashboard for academic data; financial stability; further development of our REACH program.
- What excites parents most: DEI work and anti-racist goals; that we have named specific goals for staff, students, and families in DEI; high bar set for academic success; alignment of ECE-8 at both campuses; naming fiscal responsibility as a goal.
- What concerns staff most: Questions about how to align HASE and HANE more while also allowing both campuses to meet the unique needs of their community; worry about expense and/or space for an ECE for HASE; worry about the academic gap goal (concerns about current virtual environment increasing gap, concern that it might not be realistic for English Learners, concern that it would change depending on students enrolled year to year); wondering about how to increase staff diversity and have strong retention; worry about maintaining competitive salaries and retaining staff.
- What concerns parents most: Why ECE at Southeast and not a high school program?; whole child language is missing; remote learning might be negatively impacting our academic gains; not having 6-8 at Northeast could be impacting enrollment (many area schools are K-8).

Principal Update - Sarah Verni-Lau & Guerin Gray - Inform (7: 35 pm)

Academic, engagement, and attendance data

Positive Trends at both campuses:

- All teachers are content specific and can dive deeply into one area. There is a deeper understanding of and

focus on standards.

- “Missing” student numbers are generally down from the start of the year.
- Teachers have adapted incredibly well to a new form of teaching and caring for students’ learning.

Challenges at both campuses:

- Tier 2 services are harder to provide to students.
- Shifting to in-person and then back out again so quickly creates big disruption for students.
- Keeping track of staff morale, and student/family buy-in when we do not see whole groups together at once.
- Limited ability to see whole-school data, as some students are left out.

HASE -

- Overall attendance is positive, with percentages up year on year for all grades except 3rd, 7th and 8th. Many students not attending school are facing hardships which prevent them from being able to make school a top priority. Admin team is in contact with these families to provide support or resources where available/applicable.
- The STAR assessment was administered in the fall. In Reading, 3rd grade has the highest Norm Curve Equivalent (NCE) in elementary with 72.2, and 7th grade in middle school with 69.5. Asian / Pacific Islander and White students outperformed their peers with a reading NCE at 71.1 and 69.1, respectively. In Math 2nd grade has the highest NCE at 75.4 and in middle school 6th grade at 69.8. White and Asian / Pacific Islander outperform their peers with a math NCE of 73.8 and 69.3, respectively.
- Positive trends include simplified teaching standards which have allowed for very targeted instruction. Also, parent/teacher communication is stronger than ever and there is high collaboration between home and school.
- Differentiation in classes is more challenging on a virtual platform.

HANE -

- Attendance is down year on year for all grades except 5th. In Far Northeast Denver there has been a higher infection rate which has caused the need for students and families to quarantine. The Admin team has worked to provide hotspots, devices, child care during the school day, and access to resources to help students as much as possible.
- The STAR assessment was administered in the fall. In reading, 4th grade had the highest NCE at 68.5. White and Asian / Pacific Islander students outperformed their peers with an NCE of 67.4 and 66.7, respectively. In math, 4th grade again had the highest NCE at 66.7. Asian / Pacific Islander and Black students outperformed their peers with a NCE of 66.9 and 65.4, respectively.
- Positive trends: This year we launched ‘Room Parents’ and this has helped strengthen the connection between home and school, which has become more important being virtual. Use of the Wellness team, City Year, and TAs has allowed for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Academic support of individual students both during core instruction and in extra-curricular settings.
- Challenges: Connecting with families whose children are not attending at all; continual technology issues/poor wifi coverage in Far Northeast Denver; ensuring appropriate service of the needs of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs,) particularly those who attend our M/I program, as district direction around these students has been challenging.

Reach UP - Gwen Maurello - Reach UP - Inform (7: 37pm)

School Accountability Committee (SAC)

- October 22, 2020, HANE SAC Meeting: Very diverse group of parents and staff in attendance. Provided an overview of SAC, roles, responsibilities. Reviewed the UIP as a system used to rate schools. Current focus for the committee is to assess where we are now and how we can do better. Kinder through 2nd grade are 60% above the benchmark on the Fall reading assessment, or higher.
- December 10, 2020, HASE SAC Meeting: The focus for this meeting was on student attendance. Reviewed school attendance data by percentage and then chronically absent students. Want to achieve the following: Have no missing kids, provide Internet and resources for access to classes, no cost to attend Innovation Learning, provide support for food, rent, and mental health services.

- REACH Up meeting: Discussed benefits of remote learning including: clear, consistent, and rigorous expectations; much stronger focus and alignment on standards; blended learning platforms being more fully utilized; teachers have a clear grasp on where each student is. Challenge: Star data in this context is not as reliable, so how do we translate teacher's understanding of student performance?
- Next steps include: analyzing attendance data; review mid-year STAR data (with a lens on attendance); develop yearly goals.
- The data has not changed much compared to last year because the students who are struggling most are not showing up to class, and thus not taking the assessment.

Finance Committee – Marc Furton & Eric Neumann – Fiscal Oversight – Inform (8:19 pm)

Budget to actuals

- Our debt service coverage ratio is 1.40, above the 1.10 threshold we are to maintain per the loan agreement.
- We have 110 days of unrestricted cash on hand (at \$2.16 million for 60 days) which is above the 60 days cash on hand required by our loan agreement.
- At the Southeast Campus total expense per student is \$12,734, above the \$10,500 benchmark. We are slightly above plan halfway through the year at \$2.669 million in revenues (budget is \$2.589 million). We have 5.19 months of cash on hand, above the DPS benchmark of 2 months.
- At the Northeast Campus total expense per student is \$12,816, above the \$10,500 benchmark. We are slightly above plan halfway through the year at \$2.794 million in revenues (budget is \$2.679 million). We have 2.45 months of cash on hand, above the 2 months DPS benchmark.
- We are at 83% to plan for Capital Expenditures, with land and improvements nearing the budget to 98% at \$47,070.
- We were awarded \$23k for HASE and \$30k for HANE from CSP for their remote learning grant. Also awarded \$30k from the Safe Schools Reopening grant for a special ionization component to be added to the HVAC system at HASE. Also receiving \$182k for HASE and \$180k for HANE in mil levey revenue that is not reflected in this month's report, but is expected to come in soon.
- Enrichment and before/after care fees are at or above budget as the school works to support students whose families need care options during the day.
- Deferred revenue is \$14,000 for HANE (FFE grant) and \$10,000 for HASE (FFE and Anschutz grants). It is booked as a liability on the balance sheet because it represents grant monies received in advance of incurring the grant expenditures. Once the grant expenditures are incurred the liability will be released and recognized as grant revenue.
- Net income for our Virtual Charter Academy is \$21,844.52. This is the program for students who cannot attend in-person learning at any point this year, which Highline is running in partnership for some other schools.

Reach Out – Drew Kent & Brittany Joyce - Inform (8:30 pm)

Fundraising campaign update & next steps

In October, Highline formally launched our year-long fundraising campaign to offset the state cuts to education funding due to the economic fallout of the pandemic. We are working to close the \$300,000 funding gap. So far Highline has raised \$20,814 in support of the campaign. As a reminder, fundraising is a revenue line item in our budget, as we are not a fully funded program as a charter school. We need to rally together in order to meet the goal. This includes reaching out to local businesses we patronize, organizations we are connected to, and friends who are in a position to support nonprofits like us during these trying times. Our Board is also committed to making sure our school has adequate resources, and their goal is to raise \$7,000 this year. Please socialize our cause with your network using these resources to get you started:

- [Fundraising Campaign Flyer](#)
- [Sample messaging for email and social media outreach](#)
- [Video: What DEI Means to Us](#)
- [Video: Explore our Southeast Campus](#)
- [2020 Annual Report](#)
- [Highline Academy Donation Page](#)

Reach In - Brent Baribeau - Governance - Inform (8:36pm)

Board member transitions

- Brent Baribeau and Chris Ferris are looking at fundraising training to help Board members maximize their networking capability. Once the training is complete we will incorporate it into the Board handbook for future members.
- Brent Baribeau will be reaching out to the board members who will be rolling off in June 2022 to see how to best stagger term end dates so that 7 board members do not roll off all at once.
- Brent will also be reaching out to members about an opportunity for Board leadership in 2021-2022.
- The Board evaluation for Chris Ferris as our ED will begin in January 2021.
- Eric Neumann has served on the Highline Board for 3 years and has been our Treasurer for 2 years. Eric has moved to Dallas, TX to be near family. We wish him well in his next chapter.
- Marc Furton continues in his role as Treasurer with no current Co-Treasurer.
- Brandown Hellwig became the chair of our new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee in October, transitioning out from the REACH Out committee.
- Gina Schlieman will look into training for the Board on STAR and academic accountability to help ground them in the review of data.

DEI Committee - Brandon Hellwig - Inform (8:39pm)

Parents for DEI last met on Saturday, December 12th. The Committee had a good discussion about white privilege and white identity, how those inform people's starting point and their bias, and how to intentionally broaden perspectives. The group also had a discussion about the strategic plan around the goal of becoming an anti-racist school. Would like to see more parents and community members join more frequently. The Center for Racial Justice in Education will lead an online training in February 2021 that parents will be invited to, as well as staff members who have not been able to join in the past. This is being funded by a grant from the Nord Family Foundation.

Old Business - Brent Baribeau - Inform (8:46 pm)

None

Reminders/Announcements - Brent Baribeau - Inform (8:46 pm)

Next BOD meeting: Monday, January 25, 2020 (online via Zoom)

We thank the teachers and parents for joining the call tonight and all they do to support our students.

Adjournment - Brent Baribeau - End Meeting - Vote (8:47 pm)

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