



Board Briefs

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[September 26, 2023 Regular Action Meeting](#)

[Board Meeting Videos](#)

Approval of Agenda

The Board voted to approve the September 26 agenda as presented.

Board Reports

President

Board President Dan Struck began his report by saying that he was proud that a resolution supporting *Ethan's Law* was on tonight's agenda for action. If passed in Illinois, *Ethan's Law* would require gun owners to secure their firearms in secure storage or safety device. Mr. Struck said that many incidents involving guns at K-12 schools involved guns stolen from family members.

Mr. Struck said that given District 113's responsibility to provide a safe, supportive, motivating, respectful, and inspiring environment for all of its students and staff, District 113 has an immediate interest, tied to its functioning as an educational institution, in the passage of safe firearms storage legislation such as *Ethan's Law*.

He said that while in the past couple of months many of the President's Reports have addressed serious and challenging topics, he was so pleased to see items on the evening's agenda that celebrate students and staff. First, he noted the return of the "A Passion for Excellence" video series for the 2023-24 school year. The series highlights the unique talents and passions of District 113 staff members as they fulfill District 113's mission to engage and inspire its students. Similarly, Mr. Struck said he was excited for the presentation on the spring 2023 return of Highland Park High School's treasured tradition of Focus on the Arts following a pandemic-caused hiatus. He said he also looked forward to seeing the plans underway for the inaugural Arts Alive program coming to Deerfield High School in spring 2024.

Mr. Struck then [shared the joint statement issued by the City of Highland Park, North Shore School District 112, and District 113](#) earlier in the day concerning the organizations' shared commitment to working together to protect our community. The joint statement was issued in response to the threats made to Red Oak Elementary School in North Shore School District 112 over the past week.

He closed his remarks with a "Go Giants" because it is Homecoming Week at HPHS.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Chair Dr. Jody Elliott-Schrimmer provided an update from the DEI Committee meeting that took place immediately prior to the Regular Action Meeting. Dr. Elliott-Schrimmer said that the committee discussed the work happening at both schools overseen by Assistant Superintendent for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Mirah Anti and led by the Assistant Principals of DEI Holly Fleischer (HPS) and Marcellous Moore (DHS), to address multiple areas like curriculum and instruction and at HPS specifically, increasing access to curriculum. Dr. Elliott-Schrimmer said the team is using interviews with students and staff to gather feedback on that work as well. She also said that the committee talked about staff hiring and retention, noting that the team had built out a process that will be fully rolled out in the upcoming hiring season and will continue for many years to come.

Administration Reports

Superintendent

In his report Superintendent Dr. Bruce Law shared the good news that the District 113 Communications Department won two Awards of Excellence from the Illinois chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). Excellence is the highest rating category. The first award in the category of special purpose communications is for the comprehensive communications in July 2022, “Schools Serve as the Heart of the Community: Responding to the July 4 Mass Shooting” and the second is for the video series, “[A Passion for Excellence](#).”

Focus on the Arts/Arts Alive

Focus on the Arts Director Tamara Jenkins provided the Board with a two-part presentation, the first part gave highlights of Focus on the Arts at Highland Park High School in April 2023 and the second part looked ahead to Arts Alive debuting at Deerfield High School in April 2024.

Focus on the Arts – HPS April 2023

Ms. Jenkins shared that she was happy to report that Focus returned in spring 2023 with a full program despite the limited timeline to plan, and she thanked the many dedicated volunteers for all the hours they put in to make Focus a success. She said that there were two days of programming with 320 individual workshops and presentations for students only with three evening events open to the community: Opening Night, Art Night, and Dance Night.

She said Focus moved ahead in solving some long-standing problems, notably with student scheduling workshops and technology difficulties, while also making significant progress in diversity goals. She added that a huge milestone was achieved by ensuring that all programming was accessible to students with disabilities. Going forward, Ms. Jenkins said she will be operationalizing processes for future years and that one of the ways she is going to do that is by creating a catalog of training information and videos.

She then presented [a video created by Bitter Jester](#) to showcase highlights of Focus 2023.

Arts Alive! – DHS April 2024

Looking ahead to the expansion of an arts-focused event at DHS, Ms. Jenkins described the work that occurred thus far in building the inaugural event that will take place in April 2024. She said that by meeting with building administration and staff, connecting with students, and engaging with Friends of the Arts and the PTO, they will work together to build a program unique to DHS.

Based on feedback, Ms. Jenkins said the team is planning a week-long event that for this first year will focus on fine arts. During the week, the event will not disrupt the regular schedule but will instead bring artists into individual classrooms as well as offer artists in residence to explore the intersection of the arts with other academic disciplines. On the Friday of that week, an assembly will be held so that the entire student body can experience the event at the same time. Finally, the event will culminate with an event open to the entire community on Saturday. Ms. Jenkins said they are envisioning a kind of art exposition featuring visual artists exhibiting works and creating art in the space with “pop-up” performances by other artists.

A Passion for Excellence

Dr. Law introduced the return of the award-winning video series saying that for the 2023-24 school year the series is expanding its focus to include staff from across employee categories in addition to teachers. He emphasized that employees from every area contribute to the success of District 113 students and that this series is a way to show the hard work that may not be as visible but is important to making District 113 run.

This [video](#) features Kelly Schaffner, the District 113 Registrar.

FOIA

Dr. Law reported the FOIA requests received since the last meeting and their disposition. The report is posted in BoardDocs online.

Action

Resolution Concerning Ethan’s Law

The Board voted to adopt as presented a resolution in support of *Ethan’s Law*. If passed in Illinois, gun owners would be required to secure their firearms in a “secure gun storage or safety device” if a minor is likely to gain access to the firearm without permission, or if a resident of the dwelling cannot legally possess a firearm under existing law.

Engage Baker Tilly for Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Credit Professional Services

The Board voted to engage Baker Tilly for professional services to assist with capturing a direct pay tax credit that is available through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for the solar improvement project the District is considering.

Approval of Settlement Agreement with Altria Group, Inc., and related defendants

The Board voted to approve as presented a settlement of vaping litigation with Altria Group, Inc. and related defendants in the amount of \$23,884.

Consent Agenda

The Board approved [the consent agenda](#) as presented. The consent agenda includes personnel, stipends and board bills.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings

October 10, 2023

Committee of the Whole Meeting

6:00 p.m. Closed Session, 7:00 p.m. Open Session
Administration Building

October 18, 2023 (Wednesday)
Facilities Committee Meeting
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

October 24, 2023
Regular Action Meeting
6:00 p.m. Closed Session, 7:00 p.m. Open Session
Administration Building