

Highline Public Schools | Regular School Board Meeting - October 15, 2025

Good evening, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us at our regular school board meeting. Today is Wednesday, October 15. Thanks for all. There's a packed room even with the M's game on tonight. So with that, we're going to stand up for the Pledge of Allegiance.

[AUDIO OUT]

Roll call, please?

Director Alvarez. Here.

Director Espinoza?

Here.

Vice President Tidholm?

Present.

President Van?

Here.

And Director Holien has an excused absence. And to my left is our superintendent, Dr. Duran. Any changes or additions to tonight's meeting agenda?

I'd like to propose that we add 8.1 and 8.4 to our consent agenda.

Thank you. So that's a motion to move, 8.1, this is a motion to approve the acceptance of state transitional bilingual programs funds. And then 8.4, motion to approve the renewal of the OSPI beginning educator support team grant. Those are the two? Can I please have a second?

I second.

Roll call, please?

Director Tidholm.

Yes.

Espinoza?

Yes

Director Alvarez

Yea.

President Van?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you very much. So 8.1 and 8.2 have moved to consent. Now we're going to move to our acknowledgment and appreciation. With that Dr. Duran?

Yes, it gives me a pleasure to introduce one of our new administrators here in Highline. So it's my pleasure to introduce John Kwesele, who is our new Director of Transportation. Please stand. Let's welcome John here.

[AUDIO OUT]

John is our new director. And prior to Highline, he worked as a transportation supervisor in Snohomish School District. He also served as a transportation specialist in the Federal Way School District. John began his career driving a double-decker bus in London. And John spent several years working at King County Metro, Los Angeles County Metro, and CRISTA Ministries, serving in a number of roles, including transportation supervisor, operations supervisor, maintenance supervisor, transition operator, and revenue coordinator. John has a bachelor's degree in social studies from the University of Westminster, and an MBA in project management and marketing from City University of Seattle.

He's also completed three levels of Central Washington University, four-year people transportation management training program. He is fluent in French, Swahili, Lingala and Bemba, in addition to English. Welcome, John. It's great to have you here on our team. Thank you.

Just for the record, I just want to say that we're going to move 8.1 and 8.4 to the consent agenda. I accidentally said 8.2. With that, we're going to kick it off to Director Alvarez that's going to read an appreciation.

So thank you, Director Van. And with that, I'll just do an acknowledgment for the bus safety week. And so I will be reading this acknowledgment. Whereas each school day in Highline Public Schools, more than 98 school buses provide more than 8,420 student trips with transportation between home and school, safely traveling more than 765,525 miles. And whereas school bus drivers must complete initial and ongoing annual training, and provide the highest standard of care for the students they transport, and whereas, the school bus inspection program ensures the safety of school buses and exemplifies outstanding interagency cooperation between our school district and the commercial vehicle division of the Washington State Patrol, and whereas school bus drivers, instructors, shop personnel, supervisors, and support staff perform vital functions in ensuring the safe operation of the student transportation system, and whereas ensuring motorists adhere to the rules of the road around school buses during loading and unloading of students is critical to maintaining safe conditions.

Now, therefore, the board and superintendent of Highline Public Schools do hereby proclaim October 20 to 24, as School Bus Safety Week in Highline, and urge citizens to join in this special observance. So thank you.

Thank you.

My name is Clare Gloede, the Executive Director of Foundational Support here to receive this recognition. I want to start by saying thank you, President Van, and members of the board for this recognition. On behalf of the Transportation Department, I gratefully accept and share this honor with our drivers, mechanics, monitors, and office support staff. Their daily dedication to safety and service keeps our students moving safely, and this recognition is a reflection of their hard work.

We appreciate the board's support and remain committed to maintaining the highest standards for our students and community. At this time, I'd like to ask anybody from transportation to please stand to be recognized.

[AUDIO OUT]

All right.

Go ahead.

With that, we'd just love to have you guys come on up and have a picture with us, please.

Come on.

[AUDIO OUT]

So alongside the recognition showcase tonight and at the October 1st board meeting, we have many more throughout the month of October. We invite you to visit our Facebook page to explore these additional recognitions. National Farm to School month. National Book month. On October 2nd, it was School Custodian Appreciation Day. October 6th, this is National Coaches day. October 10th, this is World Mental Health Day. October 13 is Indigenous Peoples' Day. October 13 through the 17th. This is National School Lunch week. And so please go check out our Facebook and explore these additional recognitions.

With that, we're going to move on to our school presentations. Chinook Middle School is here. So Mr. Gil Parsons, come on down.

Good evening, President Van, members of the board, Superintendent Duran. It is my duty and honor to introduce for you to welcome to this podium for tonight's school presentation the proud principal of Chinook Middle School, along with a whole bunch of folks who brought with her tonight. Principal Karin Jones, let's please welcome her to this podium.

[AUDIO OUT]

You ready? OK. Yes. I have a fabulous team of people here. So good evening, President Van, Superintendent Duran, and our school board members. My name is Karin Jones, and I have the privilege of serving as Principal at Chinook Middle School. This is my 13th year at Chinook, and it is my 29th year in serving in Highline as a teacher, an educator, instructional coach, and as a school leader.

And as a proud member of Highline, as a proud member of Highline, our promise means a great deal to me. To know every student by name, strength, their need, and to graduate, ready to choose the future of their choice.

I've got to do both things here, so I'm going to try to stay on top of this. At Chinook, we deliver on this promise through our commitment to create and sustain a culture of achievement where all students excel. And we really do this through our core values and beliefs that we have developed over the past 10 years together as a Chinook community.

And these are personalization, knowing our students really well, high expectations, excellent instruction, and really building a culture with a tone of decency and trust.

Good evening. My name is Taylor Blue and I am the Assistant Principal at Chinook Middle School. Over the past couple of years, our school has had a number of priorities, but we want to highlight the three ones that we're focusing on this year.

First of all, we're focused on literacy development for all of our students, as well as language growth for all of our students, especially highlighting our students who receive ML services. We are also continuing to build a strong sense of belonging for our staff, our families, and most importantly, for our students. We are excited about one of our annual action plan goals in particular, and that is that all of our students read at least nine books by the end of the school year.

You may have seen recently on Instagram that Chinook was #NumberOne in terms of being a top rating school and we are very proud of that. So be listening to our students and how many books they read last year.

As many of you know, these goals are important not only in Highline, but also at Chinook Middle School. Tonight, we want to highlight three key areas of work that we are doing in terms of building a culture of belonging, building our bilingual and biliterate pathways, as well as some exciting work we're doing on college and career pathways, and with our GEAR UP grant. We've invited a few people from our community to highlight our work. The first person I want to introduce is an up and coming student leader at our school, Mara LeRoy.

[AUDIO OUT]

I'm really happy to talk to you about the culture at Chinook and how it makes me feel to belong to this really diverse school. At Chinook, there is a really strong culture that welcomes everybody, no matter who you are or what you do. Like when I was in sixth grade, I felt insecure about going to an advisor and meeting all these people I might never see again. But over the past few days, I felt more like I belonged because everyone was there, being kind and helping each other. Even when they didn't feel like showing up, they were still doing their best to help and support others.

Another part about the culture at Chinook is reading. You can see this every morning at exactly 7:40 AM. You can see every kid hanging out, checking out books, or making [INAUDIBLE]. I think it's cool to see everyone working together on something they can have fun on, like reading and helping each other choose new books.

Last year, I read over 50 books, but this year I want to read over 75 books. These are just a few reasons why Chinook is a really strong and diverse school. I hope you like my talk about why people and students love the school, not just for their friends, but for their learning.

[AUDIO OUT]

Good evening. My name is Carmen Capetillo. I am new to Chinook, but I am not new to teaching. I am going on my 19th year. 16 years I spent in the classroom teaching middle school, math and science. For two years I spent serving as dean of students. I most recently received my principal certificate. Karin and Taylor asked me to share a little bit about the intentional work that Chinook has done to welcome new staff like myself, as well as building a culture of belonging for our students.

Chinook values truly align with mine as an educator as well as an aspiring leader. They have made me feel welcome, valued, and supported. It feels like home. That sense of belonging comes from the intentional practices, such as advisory lessons that shows students that they belong; family engagement that starts at the beginning of the school year, even before the school doors open; and lastly, inclusive practices that make all students feel welcomed in every classroom. Thank you.

[AUDIO OUT]

Hello, everyone, I'm. My name is Kalkidan. I am a parent. And my son is Yoftahi Zeleke. Yoftahi's in seventh grade and received special education services at Chinook. Transition from elementary to middle school is not easy for many students. For my son, I was nervous, learning a new routine, getting around school safely, and getting to know new teachers can be challenging. I feel really fortunate. The school is there whenever my son needs anything. Whenever I have any question, they are able to answer.

During the first week of school in sixth grade, my son did get lost. I came in and shared my concern with Miss Jones and ever since then, everyone works to make sure he is able to get around school. No get lost. I really want to shout out Miss Pam, his teacher. She is so helpful. She generously gives me time whenever I have a question. She goes above and beyond to help my son and prepare him for high school.

This year he is doing more in general education classes and it is going really well so far. I love the way they are teaching. Everyone is watching out for my son, so I feel lucky and I feel free to talk to all the teachers. I am proud of them. Thank you very much.

[AUDIO OUT]

Good evening. My name is Olimpia Diaz. I am the multilingual coordinator and dual language coordinator at Chinook Middle School. I would like to start by explaining the definition of multicultural because at Chinook we have a diverse community.

Multicultural refers to the coexistence and interaction of different cultural groups or individuals within a society or community. It involves the recognition and respect for the diversity of customs, beliefs, languages, values, and traditions of different cultures, as well as the promotion of inclusion and understanding among them. A multicultural cultural society or environment is one that recognizes and celebrates the differences among the members, while also promoting equality and social cohesion.

I would like you to hear from one of our wonderful students in our dual language program, [INAUDIBLE] Hernandez.

[AUDIO OUT]

Hi, my name is [INAUDIBLE] Hernandez and I'm in seventh grade and I'm a proud member of the dual language program. Dual language has helped me so much. Like last year, I read 12 books, including [SPANISH]. This year I want to read even more than last year. I'm capable to write, speak, listen and speak both English and Spanish. Being bilingual will help me to have better opportunities to have an acceptance in a better university, and to have better jobs.

I'm passionate to continue my bilingual education because I'm sure it will give me a brighter future. I'm also working with Miss Diaz to start a [SPANISH] dance group. I've been dancing with [SPANISH SPEECH] for nine years, and I really wanted to bring dance to our school. I think it will be great to get this started. We are planning on hosting family nights and getting more kids involved into our talent show. Thank you.

[AUDIO OUT]

The dual language program is giving students the opportunity to achieve grade level in both languages. They are able to read, write, listen and speak in English and Spanish. It provides multicultural skills that enable students to live, work, and communicate across cultures. Our dual language program has starting path since kindergarten at Madrona Elementary and continues at Chinook Middle School with a bilingual education, having history, social studies in Spanish and science in Spanish, and Spanish language arts.

Our program promotes cultural understanding, increases career prospects, strengthens memory capacity, and enhances language skills. Our students at Chinook also can learn Spanish starting at level one, and following a path to a heritage class, where they can learn more about the culture. At Chinook, they can receive biliteracy certificate at the end of eighth grade, but the bilingual education continues in high school, where they will receive another biliteracy certificate with higher value. Thank you.

[AUDIO OUT]

Hello, everyone. My name is Tarekegn Kabeto, or TK. I am the GEAR UP program coordinator at Chinook Middle School and I am a product of Highline School District myself. I attended Chinook middle school when I first moved to the US, and graduated from Tyee High School. I also earned my bachelor's degree from UW Seattle in communication and business, and I have served at Tyee High School as a pathway coach through AmeriCorps during my last two years in college.

Now, I am excited to be part of Chinook Middle School through the GEAR UP grant. All seventh and eighth grade students at Cascade, Chinook, and Glacier middle schools are automatically enrolled in GEAR UP. Achievers GEAR UP is a program that works with those students in supporting them, gaining awareness about college and career as early as middle school. GEAR UP will follow this cohort until they graduate high school.

This summer, we hosted a three-week summer program in July, and more than 30 students participated in our [INAUDIBLE] STEM exploration camp, including MJ. We were able to collaborate with AVELA from UW to learn about virtual reality and coding, and our students had the opportunity to go off campus for field trip once a week to UW Museum of Flight and Museum of Glass. At the end of our program, we hosted a family celebration for our students to present their final projects based on their summer experience to their families.

One of the biggest events we've done so far this year is we collaborated with all seventh and eighth grade advisory classes to do college-themed door decoration competition, and this gives gave the students the opportunity to gain awareness of what college research looks like as early as middle school students. We're excited to have just launched an after-school program to provide academic enrichment at Chinook Middle School, and we hope to continue using GEAR UP as an opportunity to expand college and career exploration to our students. Thank you.

[AUDIO OUT]

That's everything. Hopefully we were under our 10 minutes. We weren't.

It was good. Thank you.

But if you have any questions, we're happy to answer.

Thank you very much. Directors, any follow up questions?

I just want to say thank you. Thank you to the students as well for speaking. I think that to us, I would say I speak for myself is to hear directly from the students and the impact that it has in the programs and, and just hearing your reading like your goals for this year, you want to read more books. That's just incredible to hear, also the support that you guys are giving each other. So continue on the good work and thank you for coming tonight and speaking. Your words are highly valued, so thank you.

Thank you so much. I'm so inspired by the stories of the students. I also have an annual goal. I've only ever read 35 books in one year, so you are awesome. So continue on that track and then please invite me when the dance [SPANISH] is up and running. I'm happy to attend and support. Thank you to the parents who are here for supporting your students and to everyone who supports our schools. Thank you.

Thank you, Vice President Tidholm, any questions or comments?

Yes. Thank you. As Director Alvarez said, for the students, I mean, we hear a lot of things from a lot of different people. But it is great hearing from the students and what's your perspective. It's really important. Also very impressed with the reading. I know when I was a kid, I was really motivated to read, but I had a pizza as motivation. So I'm happy to see that the babies are reading books, and actually, it sounds like enjoying it. And I'd love to see how we can influence some of our other schools with that's going on, with it being a priority for mine and the district to get our babies reading at a higher level in literacy, just being really important. I really appreciate the work that you guys are putting into that and everything that you're doing for the babies.

Thank you so much for that. Principal Jones, it feels like yesterday that you had my kids in elementary school and followed you all the way up through Chinook, so wow, 13 years at Chinook, and 29 with Highline, so just blessed to have you. So thank you for being here tonight.

I'm really interested in knowing about the bilingual certificate at the end of eighth grade. And what success rate it is once those students go to high school and get their seal of biliteracy. So can you share some success in regards to how those students are preparing in middle school and getting that all through high school?

Of course. So this is going to be a growing path that we have with the bilingual program. So as last year, we just had the biliteracy certificate as when they finished eighth grade. But considering that we need to continue the motivation of the students, we decided that it is important that they also receive a diploma that is a biliteracy certificate 2 at the end of high school, and that is going to have a higher value.

The students have to prove that they have high scores in speaking, listening, writing, and reading in Spanish and in English to be able to get the certificate. So we based this on WIDA scores and i-Ready scores. So we see all the growth of the student and that's how they get the certificate.

All right. Thank you so much. And that concludes--

You're welcome, thank you.

That's it. So thank you so much. Anything else you'd like to add?

There's nothing else that we need to add. We're just so happy to be here. Thank you.

Thank you, everybody. Can we give them around of applause?

[AUDIO OUT]

All right. With that, we're going to move on to our superintendent's reports, Dr. Duran?

Yes Thank you, Karin. Thank you, Chinook Middle School for being here. I just to thank everyone for being here tonight. I am excited to announce that our own Tove Tupper, the Chief Communication Officer, was selected to receive the inaugural Washington School Public Relations Association's School Communicator of the Year Award. This prestigious award celebrates one act of frontline communicator each year who demonstrates excellence in strategic leadership, effective communication, professional growth, and community engagement. We're incredibly lucky to have Tove at Highline. Congrats, Tove. Please take a stance when we give you round of applause.

[AUDIO OUT]

While on the topic of middle schools, I also had the opportunity to visit Sylvester Middle School last week and spoke with Principal Kodama about their work to lean into the SLIM priorities, secondary school redesign, literacy, inclusion, and MTSS. It was great to see this focus in action as we visited classrooms and to see evidence of the redesign work. They're ensuring incoming sixth grade students are grouped together and have fewer rotations. They also have added three opportunities for interventions in support of students reading. So it was really great to see that work in action over at Sylvester.

And now I'd like to welcome Jeb Binns, our Highline Education Association's President, to the podium to share a few remarks and maybe an update on the score.

[AUDIO OUT]

I can tell you, I absolutely cannot read what my daughter just texted me about the Mariners game. It is inappropriate for all levels of education, including the fact that we are down at least four runs at this point, probably more. OK, moving on. Good evening.

President Van, directors, Superintendent Duran. I get a split message tonight. So here you go. It's about following the procedures. It's about following the collective bargaining agreement. Without contractual guardrails and procedures, the mind wanders. The mind wonders if favoritism is in play, and if the written word does not matter, what does? We need to do it right. We need to hit our timelines. We need our ACT plans in. We need our equitable substitute coverage plans in. We need our school conference schedules in. We need to do it right and not what's convenient.

And now, because I promised, I'll flip the script. On the flip side, I'd like to thank all of our schools for coming to our Joint Base Building Labor Management meeting on October the 6th. And I have a special shout-out to all of our ILADs who attended that training for the first time. I appreciate them for leaning in and learning the expectation that we all, as a system, have for schools and worksite problem solving. I'd like to Thank all of our administrators and building representatives for attending this training, and I look forward to experiencing the fruits of their labor in time

Tomorrow, our Vice President, Shawna Moore and I head to Pasco for our roles as co-chairs of the WA Human and Civil Rights Committee. Friday, we will deliver some equity professional development for our colleagues out in Pasco and in the southern part of Washington State. And on Saturday, we will co-host the Human and Civil Rights Leadership Summit. The work matters, vitally important. We will continue it in all aspects of the state.

Shawna, our new NEA Director, just returned from war-torn Washington, DC. She looks forward to working with any and all Highline School Board directors who are working on the legislative platform. And again, I encourage you to join HEA, doorbell-ing for pro-education, pro-labor, pro-levy and pro-democracy candidates on the 25th of October. Thank you.

Very good. Thank you, Jeb I also want to just give a shout-out to Shawna Moore. And Thank you, Shauna, for your work on the K-12 equity funding workgroup. I know you guys have finished up your first body of work that was appointed by the legislators after the session. I know you're working with the student weighting factor subgroup. So thank you for representing not only Highline, but the other 294 districts in this state.

All right. Now, it's my pleasure to invite Jackie Bryant, our Chief Financial Officer, up to share a budget update. Jackie is coming in, this again, our process and math to be able to ensure that we are transparent with our budget, providing updates to our community, and allowing people to provide feedback to us as necessary throughout the year. Thank you.

Thank you. Good evening. I'm here to do a brief update on budget. As you know, we are in October, which means we are closing out our '24-25 fiscal year. And so as the team is working on that, we will present to you the information at the budget work session on November 12.

So tonight, I really wanted to focus on enrollment and some positive news about enrollment. Here we go. So just a brief refresher of where we were in September, I came and presented and we discussed really what the September enrollment looks like compared to the rest of the year. And usually, as I mentioned, September enrollment is actually usually lower than the annual average for the year. So as of the fourth day count, which is the day that we need to report, we were down 212 students from projection.

But then you can see, as of 9/16, when we reran those numbers, we had gained considerable enrollment, and we were actually over projection by 127 students. So it just shows you the swings that we experience in September as students enroll or unenroll, and as we process all of that information throughout the month.

So then looking forward to October, these are initial enrollments. So our enrollment is actually due on Friday to the state. So we are finalizing the numbers this week. But this should be almost exactly what we're going to report. So we are actually over projection in enrollment again. So that is great news. We are 180 FTE or 180 students over budget in the budgeted projections.

So what that means is our projections were very close and as we go throughout the year and end with our annual average, I would predict that we will be very close to projection, if not slightly higher, for the annual average for the year.

You can see just at the grade level, slightly over in both elementary and middle school, a little bit slightly under projection in comprehensive high schools. And then our Choice Schools are a little bit over projection. And that's kind of the trend we've seen year over year.

So this slide shows you enrollment trends over the past five years. There's a lot of lines on there. But we've added the green line, which is for 2025-26. You can see there's definitely a trend throughout the first day, the fourth day count number, final September numbers, and then our October and our annual average. So we are exactly on the same trend that we have seen for the past five years. Our final October numbers are slightly higher than last year's, which is we had projected to be right there. So great news is that we're coming in exactly where we had projected to be.

So what's next? As I mentioned, November 12th will be our budget board work session, the first one of the year of a series of work sessions throughout the year. We also, in October and November, the budget team will be doing some fall resource alignment meetings with schools. And then on November 6, at the foundational leadership meeting, the budget team will be presenting. And really, our focus for both of those meetings is a new tool that we have called Allovue. We're rolling it out this fall.

It's an integrated financial management platform, and it's designed to help schools, departments and district leaders plan, manage, and track budgets and spending in real time. And so this is going to be extremely helpful for everyone. We will no longer be tracking all our budgets in Excel on spreadsheets. And we will have this. This platform actually sits on top of our finance system which is BusinessPlus. So they're integrated, which is great.

It really streamlines a lot of our budget requests, approvals, allocations, and reporting, and it'll create additional transparency and efficiency as we go through this budget development year. So excited to roll that out this fall. And then November 15, as I mentioned, is our big date for the year end close. So that is when our '24-25 year end F196 is due to the state. And so we will be presenting those numbers to you a few days before the state receives them. With that, I'm happy to answer any questions.

Thank you so much, Jackie. Directors any follow up comments or questions?

I do have one comment or a question in regards to all of you training, Dr. Grant shared a little bit with me about that. He's pretty excited. I am as well. You said building leaders as well as district leaders will have access to this program, and so they'll be able to be proactive in regards to looking at their budgets, looking at future and past, and making those decisions based off of your RAM meetings as well, correct?

Yes. In the past, the way we've had to provide budget information is really going into BusinessPlus, which is our finance system, downloading into Excel spreadsheets, and then creating reports that way. This is almost like a dashboard that sits on top. So it's much more user friendly. And you can see you can do a lot of trend analysis in it that we haven't been able to do in the past.

Yeah, I was pretty excited to see the drill-down from high level all the way down. So I'm pretty excited to see that more. Thank you.

OK.

Thank you.

All right. Thank you, Jackie. That concludes my comments.

Thank you so much, Dr. Duran. And with that we're going to move to our director's report. Doctor Espinoza, I'm going to have you start off tonight.

OK. Thank you. So as we heard last work session around literacy, educators across Highline are building skills in every subject and across every grade. At Tyee High School. Biology teacher Satprit Kaur uses science to strengthen students' reading and writing skills, and helps them to expand their vocabulary. Students read a scientific text, write about their lab results, and use a scientific vocabulary to explain their thinking.

So let's see this in action. We have a short video to share with you all.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- Literacy is embedded within science. In order to do science, you need to have reading skills. You need to have writing skills. And what a leg up we could give our students if we can teach those skills. I try to embed reading and writing into most of my lessons using content, like science, but supporting it with academic language.

- It helps me to learn biology better. For example, mitosis or meiosis, I know how to use those words and how to help somebody else understand it.

- I think sometimes students feel like they're not able to do difficult work, but then being able to watch them be like, oh yeah, I did write this giant paragraph that has fancy words in it. The little things you can do to support them with feeling more confident, I think, make a big difference.

- Literacy helps you overcome restriction, being able to express your thoughts freely. It makes me feel future ready because it helps me take words from my surroundings, scan them, and break them down, and use it in a way that I wouldn't be able to use them before.

- You're giving students a real leg up in being able to have options after high school. No matter what they do after high school, they're going to need to be able to access texts and be able to write in clear ways. I hope my students feel like I can do science. Science is not scary.

Even if I don't become a scientist in the future, I can understand scientific ideas. So it's really humbling to be able to get to watch kids on their journey, and grow and develop their skills. This job brings me a lot of joy.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[END PLAYBACK]

OK, and then our Future Ready Fest took place this week. There were more than 400 students and families who joined us. Future Ready Fest is our annual college and career fair. It's meant to help students and families explore many options beyond high school, and to help them take their next steps with confidence.

Students learned about career and college pathways and connected with our community partners. Thank you to the college and career readiness team and all the community partners who attended and made this possible. I also want to note that last meeting, Principal Jones from North Hill, invited us to spend a day with her as a principal. And so I will be at North Hill on Friday. I'll report back to you when I see you next.

Thank you so much. Director Alvarez?

Thank you, President Van. Well, CFAC meeting, just an update, so we were able to meet last week. I wasn't present at that meeting. I had to go out of town. But they met last week, and they continue to work towards the bond package recommendation. They're reviewing and analyzing conceptual sites layouts and the potential cost for the seven aging school sites that are being provided by the Bassetti Architects.

The committee members discussed balancing, replacement, and modernization projects, the site availability, the funding opportunities, and also for the future bond timing. Also, I wanted to just throw another shout-out for the Brat Trot. I had an opportunity to spend time with the executive director the other day, and we were at another event, and he was saying that there's still just on a high end, how many people registered this year compared to last, and how all those funds will be helping our families.

And so it's just great to hear when the community comes together to support an event that supports our kids. So thank you to that as well, for all those that attended. I got to see many old friends and new friends. I had some people from my work actually as a team sign up, so it was good to see. So still another shout-out for that just because it's still being talked about. So I'm excited to hear about all that's happening. Thank you.

Thank you so much, Director Alvarez.

Vice President Tidholm?

Yes, just a huge thank you for everybody that joined the grand openings of our new Evergreen and Tyee High Schools. We're super proud to welcome more than 400 community members and alumni at each school. And the events were beautiful. The new schools were made possible by the voters who overwhelmingly supported these projects, and really grateful that both buildings were completed on time and on budget. And next up, looking forward to Pacific Middle School, which will be opening in the fall of 2027. And that's all that I have today.

Thank you very much. And I had the pleasure to attend the first Vietnamese Moon Festival, hosted by the White Center Heights Elementary and Cascade Middle School. More than 400 students and families attended and enjoyed the food, student performances, and lantern parade. It brought back a lot of memories for me when I was younger and going to church. We call it [NON-ENGLISH], which is the lantern festival, and it just brought back all those kids celebrating the new moon and just everything, and it was really great to see our community gather, and enjoy, and celebrate the culture. So it was really great.

Our next board meeting is going to be on November 12. So three weeks out from now, I just want everybody to get out there and vote on November 4th. So that concludes my director's report.

And with that, we're going to move to our scheduled communications. On behalf of the board, we sincerely appreciate you taking the time to join us and sharing your thoughts this evening. You'll notice that our norms and guidelines are displayed on the screens for your reference. Please remember that you're addressing the board and there may be students present or watching who are listening carefully to what you're saying. Please note while the board is unable to respond directly to your testimony during the meeting, we value your input and thanks again for being here and speaking with us.

First speaker is Helena Caldwell

Hello. My name is Helena Caldwell, and I am the Highline High School Drill Team coach. I've been the head drill team coach for 15 years. I came here today to speak for my team on their behalf, but I saw that my captains actually signed up to speak and half of my team showed up. And so I was wondering if it would be OK if my captains came up, because I feel like hearing what they would have to say is a little bit more impactful than listening to me speak, if that's OK.

[AUDIO OUT]

OK. Come on.

So you're yielding your time to them?

Yes.

OK.

They also have a time signed up, but--

If Valeria is signed up, then she can speak at her time, but the other students can speak.

Good afternoon to the school board. My name is Camila Medina Lara, and I'm here with my teammates, Camila Rubalcava and Valeria Farias Rivera. We have been on the drill team for four years, and each year that we have been on the team, we have qualified for nationals, but we never actually had the chance to participate in the actual competition. Not once have we ever received a clear reason of why we couldn't attend. And other teams that we have competed against in our region have been able to attend and participate in nationals, and we don't understand why we aren't allowed to do the same.

It was especially disheartening when we heard the news that other sports teams and activities in our district were able to travel out of state, and even internationally. The drill team is a recognized WIAA activity just like other sports. It is inequitable that other sports teams are offered the opportunity to represent their school and community abroad, and we are not.

Since our freshman year, as a year-round sport, we have practiced more hours and competed more frequently than any other single sports team. We love to represent our school at community events and competition. It would be an honor for us to represent our school and our district at a national level. Going to nationals would also acknowledge all our time and hard work we have spent representing Highline School, Highline as leaders and student ambassadors.

Thank you very much.

[AUDIO OUT]

David Ruby?

[AUDIO OUT]

Thank you, directors and Dr. Duran, for listening openly on an issue. I come to you with support from over 70 educators at Highline High School, petition of which I will leave with you. We're asking for a much more robust tardy policy in our district. Tardies are one of the greatest challenges facing our schools. State law has recently changed and is clear about absences, but we're not here to talk about absences, tardies. Due to changes in state law, how we track tardies is more critical than ever.

Districts do have the authority to set a tardy policy that suits its needs so long as not contrary to state law. We ask that you take the pulse of your constituents, not mediated through district staff, but one in which you gauge feelings directly from the source. Asking families, students in leadership, frontline educators, counselors, deans, and yes, even building principals and ask them a simple question. Are you satisfied with how tardies are tracked? Currently, schools have two choices, regular tardy and unexcused excessive tardy, a new code provided to staff in the last few years.

While excessive tardy may seem sufficient, we currently have no way to differentiate between a student who arrives, say, 10 minutes late to class and one who comes over halfway through class, or even the last couple of minutes of class. These are qualitatively different situations, demanding a much better measurement tool. We believe families will be better served with a more than 50% tardy code. HHS, for example, now runs on a quarter system for period day. If a student arrives late just a handful of times, it's a huge loss of learning and can quickly amount to 10% or 20% of the course after just a few excessive tardies.

This new code would benefit all stakeholders. Students would be held more accountable. Families would have closer partnership with the schools, and appreciate knowing we cared enough to track things more accurately, so they can do their job at home better. In--

[AUDIO OUT]

Alex Myrick?

[AUDIO OUT]

Good evening, directors. Today, I learned of an urgent issue requiring me to preempt my original testimony. The issue is a pornographic assignment for ninth graders at Evergreen High School. The assignment is *The Book of Unknown Americans*. It appears to be a mediocre story of immigration, poverty, and romance, seeking a higher profile by including depictions of anal sex, oral sex, child sex abuse, f-bombs, and description of rape by agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The author and publisher have the right to produce this, but many of your constituents do not believe the district should allocate funds and library space for a book such as this. Make it required reading for 14 and 15-year-olds, and to be read aloud in class is beyond the [INAUDIBLE]. As I have previously mentioned, over 50% of Highline students are three years or more behind academically. For many of these students, this will be the very first novel they will have ever read.

When there's a wealth of excellent literature available, why should their very first novel be a mediocre one with pornographic elements? Poverty, hardship, and oppression, they could read the *Grapes of Wrath*. For tragedy, Immigration, and hardship, they could read *Esperanza Rising*. For idealism versus reality, they could read *Don Quixote*. For romance, they could read the novels of Jane Austen. We can reasonably disagree on priorities, methods, and even values, but this is something about which we should have unity.

If you have any decency, you will pass a motion ordering Superintendent Duran to remove this pornographic book from the syllabus and the required reading for ninth grade.

[AUDIO OUT]

Patricia Bailey?

[AUDIO OUT]

Good evening. In the voters pamphlet for the Highline School Levy that advocates for a yes vote, it states that funds are needed for, quote, "day-to-day operations" and to, quote, "keep the lights on." This has all the appearance of the use of fear to motivate votes. Highline voters are in favor of fully funding education, as am I. However, when we see how tax dollars are actually being used, major alarms go off.

The 2024 salary of Washington State Governor Bob Ferguson was around \$204,000 a year. That sounds like a lot of money, but when you consider he's responsible for governing the entire state of Washington, it makes sense. However, according to the 2024 government tops.salaries.com, it shows over 20 Highline central administrators making more than the governor.

But that's not all. The superintendent is making over \$339,000 a year, which is over \$134,000 more than our Washington State governor. Perhaps, this would make sense if Highline was one of the highest performing school districts in our state. But when compared to all the other Washington State districts, Highline is near the bottom in all state tests.

The average individual income of Burien residents is less than \$52,000 a year, according to an internet search assistant. And yet, these residents are being asked to fund exorbitant salaries with poor outcomes. The school board must develop fiscal responsibility as well as compassion for our overtaxed working families, and go back to the drawing board to cut excessive spending as well as direct the money to the classroom.

[AUDIO OUT]

And then, Valeria, you spoke earlier, so-- yeah, she's unable to speak at this time. She spoke earlier. No. I apologize. And then our last speaker is Wendy Bolton.

[AUDIO OUT]

OK. Good evening, board members. My name is Wendy Butzerin, and I am a parent living in the Highline district. I'm deeply concerned about the district's lack of transparency regarding curriculum. Parents need to be able to trust their schools. Local media reported this week about an Evergreen High School father whose ninth grader was assigned a book called *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henriquez. He also reported the book was read aloud in class.

While intended to broaden cultural understanding, the fictional story centers around a migrant family from Mexico and includes explicit content about a 15-year-old girl being raped by an immigration agent. Frankly, I would find that book very uncomfortable to read out loud, and even if I was willing, according to public testimony norms and rules, I cannot read anything that is abusive, obscene, or indecent because students may be listening.

I can only imagine the extreme discomfort felt by the ninth grade class. Not all parents of 14 and 15-year-olds would be on board with the sexual content, or the delicate subject matter of this book. How are parents expected to make informed decisions about what their children are reading in class or discuss it at home with them, if they're not properly informed of the explicit sexual nature? The district publicly defended the book and shared the syllabus disclaimer. Some of the materials used may contain explicit or sensitive content, such as profanity and/or violence. All materials will be age, grade, and subject appropriate.

However, sexual content alert is not included in the disclaimer. Yes, *The Book of Unknown Americans* is a fictional novel, but if I was a 14-year-old girl, this narrative would carry the same emotional weight as a true story. How does this book affect girls who have a history of abuse or rape? I respectfully urge the board to direct the instructional materials committee to seek alternatives to trauma-inducing content, and clearly communicate to families with. The materials include. Please help parents to trust the schools again.

[AUDIO OUT]

And that concludes our speakers this evening. Thanks, everybody, for coming and speaking with us tonight. That said, we're going to move to our consent agenda. Any questions or comments before we approve them? Hearing and seeing none, can I please have consent? Motion to approve?

I make a motion we approve our consent agenda.

Can I please have a second?

I second.

All those in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Any opposed? Hearing and seeing none, thank you. We're going to move to our action item 8.1 was moved to our consent agenda. 8.2, this is motion to approve the Highly Capable Students Program. State Formula Grant '25-26 school year. Any questions or comments on this?

[AUDIO OUT]

Go ahead.

OK. So in the bar it says that this fund-- so would these funds be used to pay for Thrively or no? Just in the bar, it said it was mostly like for training and capacity building for teachers and opportunities for students.

[AUDIO OUT]

Katie Berg is coming up. Welcome, Katie.

Thank you. Yes so in the grant, the money that comes from the grant pays for a series of things. Some is staffing, so a specialist that works for the Highly Capable department that manages all of the students' plans and the communication. We also pay for part of a data specialist to help us with the testing and making sure that everything is disaggregated, and we're able to analyze effectiveness. And then we pay for various platforms for students' portfolios to be housed on, for testing licenses, and then additionally, we have some of it be flexible throughout the year to, as needed, add on things as we work to pilot things.

OK. Thank you.

Any other questions or comments?

Katie, I think you're good.

Thank you.

With that can I please have a motion?

I move that the Highline School Board approve the Highly Capable State Grant application in the projected amount of \$645,000 and annual program plan for the 2025-2026 school year.

Thank you. Can I please have a second?

I'll second that.

Roll call, please.

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

Director. Tidholm?

Yea.

Director Espinoza?

Yes.

President Van?

Yeah.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you very much. 8.3, this is motion to approve the IMC members this is for three additional appointments to the committee. On June 18, the board took action to approve 13 IMC members. This is for the additional three. I just really want to call out that we had heard from our community that parents were to be involved, and parents selected from the Superintendent's Family Action committee to ensure that their perspective is part of this committee.

So I just want to call out the three new appointments. This is Russell Stahlke, Catherine Whitney, and Katie Utesch. So with that, any questions or comments in regards to the additional three committee members?

So President Van, are you saying that they are parents from the Family Action Committee?

Yeah, so on June 18, we approve the 13 out of those 13, two of them were parents.

OK.

These are three additional teachers that we're going to be adding on.

Yeah. And is there opportunity to increase parent family participation in the future?

For the future? Yes, there is.

Yes. And so the board approves IMC membership. This is in two phases for this time around. And we'll have opportunity to approve new membership for the next year. And yes, in short, there's always opportunity.

OK. Thank you.

Thank you for that. Any any other questions or comments? With that can I please have a motion?

I move that the Highline School Board approve superintendent's three additional appointments to the instructional materials committee for the 2025-26 school year. And I'll need a second.

I second.

Roll call, please?

Director Espinoza?

Yes.

Director Tidholm?

Yea.

Dr. Alvarez?

Yea.

President Van.

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you. And 8.4 was moved to consent agenda. That's going to lead us into our intro and action items. 9.1, this is motion to adopt the '25-26 board annual goals. This is, per policy 1810, our annual goals, and objectives, and self-assessment. Each year, the board will formulate goals and objectives to guide effective board governance. The three goals proposed for the '25-26 school year were discussed at our September 25 board retreat, and and build upon the work from '24-25 school year. The focus on crafting a shared purpose, deepening the board's understanding and use of its governance model, and visiting schools with the focus on the district's four priorities.

So that the '25-26 goals will be evaluated by the board in June of '26, so at the end of the school year. And the item is recommended for intro and action at the same meeting, due to the discussion held at the September 27 board retreat. With that, any questions or comments?

Hearing and seeing none, can I please have a motion?

I move that the Highline School Board adopt the following board goals for the '25-26 school year to be evaluated in June 2026. One, craft a board-shared purpose; two, deepen understanding and use of current governance model and review if it's working in alignment with to-be-developed board shared purpose; and number three, conduct school visits focused on districts four priorities--secondary design, literacy, inclusion, and multi-tiered systems of support. And I need a second.

I second.

Roll call please?

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

Director Espinoza?

Yes.

Director Tidholm?

Yea.

President Van?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you very much. Our second intro in action, this is 9.2. This is motion to approve revision and renaming of board policy and procedure 1105, Director District Boundaries. This item was also discussed at the September 27 board retreat. Districts are not changing, nor are school boundaries, so I just want to make that clear. There's nothing changing. All we're doing is we're updating our list of schools to reflect all active school sites.

We're also proposing to add "list of schools" to the name of the policy and procedure to reflect the full content. Any questions or comments? I just want to reiterate there's no boundaries in there. OK? No redistricting with that. So with that, can I please have a motion?

I move the Highline School Board, approve the revisions to and renaming of board policy and procedure 1105 to become Director Districts and List of Schools.

OK.

I'll second that.

Thank you. Roll call please?

Director Tidholm?

Yea.

Director Espinoza?

Yes.

Director. Alvarez?

Yea.

President Van?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you. 9.3, this is motion to approve revisions to Board Procedure 1733, Board Member Compensation. This item would add preparation for board meetings to a list of things that directors can be compensated for. It does not change either the amount per day or the amount per year that a director can receive. Those amounts are capped by state law. So any questions or comments on this?

No, just I'm thankful that it's going to add more clarity into what it is, what are we able to do during [INAUDIBLE] for our compensation. And before, so to me, it just felt like it was something that needed to be stated. We all knew it. We all did it. What's being added is just that we are able to prepare. How can we come to a board meeting and not be prepared? We've all been doing it. And so I'm just thankful it's finally been added. It was added before. I don't know at what point it was taken off, but now it's like we're adding it again. So I'm thankful for that.

And just to clarify, the max a day is \$50, and the annual total is \$4,800. That's the max.

That's max.

It's not changing.

Any other comments or questions on that? Thank you. Can I please have a motion?

I move the Highlands School Board approve the revisions to procedure 1733, Board Member Compensation.

Can I please have a second?

I'll second that.

Roll call please?

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

Director Espinoza?

Yes.

Director Tidholm?

Yea.

President Van?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you very much. Well, that concludes our intro and action items this evening. We have one intro tonight and then we're going to have a presentation. So I'm going to have Jackie come on down. 10.1, this is motion to approve resolution 14-25 for certification of the 2026 excess property taxes.

Hi, Jackie.

Hi. Good evening, again.

Yes, resolution number 14-25 is to certify the 2026 excess property tax collections for Highline Public schools. So this is a resolution that we bring annually in October to certify the collection for calendar year 2026. The general fund levy is from our previously passed education Levy in 2021. And it covers the years through 2026.

So this will be the final year of collection on this levy. The debt service ensures repayment of our bonds that we use to fund capital projects, previously approved by voters. So state law requires the board to certify both the general fund and the debt service fund levy amounts each year for the upcoming calendar year. So again, this is for all of 2026.

One thing to know about levies, because we've been talking about levies a lot lately, there is a kind of a four-step process as we go through and talk about levies. So the first one is authorization. That's really when voters approve a levy to be collected. The second is when we budget for our levies. So each year we will do it within the fiscal year budget. And that covers two calendar years when we do that budget.

And then the third step is what we're doing tonight, certifying the levy amount that we are able to collect the following calendar year. So that's 2026. And then finally, that authorizes us to collect in the spring and the fall.

So this approval enables us to collect \$69.9 million for the general fund and \$73 million for the debt service fund in 2026. This revenue supports all the things we've discussed that the levy supports, educational programs and then also on the debt service side is timely repayment of our funds. So this fulfills board policy 6020, financial management. That requires us to come to you for the certification each year. So I'm happy to answer any questions around the certification and once this is certified and the resolution is signed, we will submit it to the state to enable collections.

Thank you, Jackie. Directors any questions or comments? I don't see any.

Not now.

I don't hear anything.

Thank you.

Thank you so much, Jackie.

That is the end of our intro. Items. Any additions to the upcoming consent agenda? Any additions?
OK, with that, hearing and seeing, that concludes our meeting of this evening. I would like to have a motion, please.

I make a motion we adjourn.

Second?

I second.

All those in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Any opposed? Hearing and seeing none. Thank you, everybody, for being here tonight.