



MINUTES

Full Board of Directors Meeting

March 17, 2025

6:15 pm

The meeting was held virtually via Zoom using this [link](#)

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:

Ambar Suero, Co-Chair
Katherine Casey, Co-Chair
Kaylee Hart, Treasurer
Annie Bielecki, Secretary

Board Members:

Joe Whitfield, Board Member
Nikea Bland, Board Member
Drew Goltermann, Board Member
Grace Nailing, Board Member
Kenny Smith, Board Member
Ramone Carson, Board Member
Kelly Fleming, Board Member
Katondra Dunn, Board Member

Highline Ex-Officio Members:

Chris Ferris, Highline Academy Executive Director
Sarah Verni-Lau, Highline Academy Southeast Principal
Vanessa Rodriguez, Highline Academy Northeast Principal
Arizona Alli, Communications and Development
Alex Bowden, Outreach and Marketing
Maya Balakier
Ilyse Bekerman

Other:

Roberta Toliver
Ashlee Morris
Heather Miles
Cortney Fry
Vincent Lucero
Rebecca Farnsworth
Darien Key
Travis Lambert

Absent:

Alexander Landau, Board Member
Sloane Macy, Board Member

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Presenter</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Call to Order – Ambar Suero – Call to Order (6:18 pm) Quorum Establish A quorum of the Board was established. The agenda was adopted with no changes. Mission Moment Nikea read aloud the mission and vision statement. She said that especially in light of the current political climate, she is proud to have Highline continue its work towards equity and inclusion.			
Consent Agenda – Ambar Suero – Governance – Vote (6:20 pm) Minutes from the February meeting A motion was made by Ambar and seconded by Catherine to approve the Feb, 2025 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.			
See BOD Packet for: - Report from Reach Up - Report from DEI/Reach Together - Budgets for 25-26 - Budget to Actuals			
Public Comment (6:21 pm) - Arizona framed the public comment. - Heather read an anonymous comment from HASE - Staff Culture is toxic, morale is at a low, survey feedback was scathing and leadership and the principal is to blame. Responses to the HASE survey say that 25% are unhappy with the principal. Complaints about lack of empathy, leadership not being held accountable. High turnover. - Heather Miles - Comment on upcoming CMAS test. Your encouragement would make a world of difference. Heather proposes to assign each board member a grade level and each board member writes a letter of encouragement to the class.			
Principal Update - Sarah Verni-Lau & Vanessa Rodriguez - Inform (6:27 pm) - Vanessa - we are wrapping up a successful month at both schools. Working with William Anderson about engaging culturally competent classrooms. ANET and district partners will be walking through HANE. Both schools participated at a math seminar and are looking at piloting a new math curriculum. - Sarah - Dr. Anderson did a HASE PD session last week. In the powerpoint presentation is the response to the survey that HASE did- there are teacher committees for rising to the challenges facing HASES right now as far as work culture goes. By the beginning of May teachers will be presenting to the staff and implementing programs and changes for the following year. - Ramone asked how they are responding differently to the survey as opposed to previous years. In previous years numeric scores were shared. This year Sarah shared the constructed response with the teachers so they had a better idea of specifically what the complaints are. She then grouped teachers together to form the committees and voted in leaders- these groups will reflect on feedback and leaders will meet with Sarah periodically to figure out next steps. - Heather Miles weighed in as a long time staff member- says its important work. Arizona mentioned that it's very intentional and open ended and allows teachers to truly voice their own opinions and experiences. - Ramone asked if there's any one particular issue. Heather Miles answered that all the buckets they will be dealing with are interdependent. Chris mentioned that while these committees are new, the idea of teacher-led committees is something that has been used often at Highline. Sarah shared that the beginning of the school year was very bumpy and was a rough start. She wants to allow teachers to speak freely and			

share if they are burnt out. Ilyse said that there's a lot of committee buy-in from the teachers.

Finance Committee - Kaylee Hart - Inform and Vote (6:41 pm)

- HASE has a large building cost coming up (Water Heater), no concern as we have the funds.
- Kaylee projects a deficit for next year at HANE, but the year after we will be back on track due to the ability to accept more pupils. This deficit will be covered by reserves and is projected to be very short term.
- This budget is very conservative (2% PPR) and will be changed based on the Middle School addition.
- Sarah clarified that HASE is holding at 590 students.
- Drew asked how worried we should be- Kaylee clarified that our reserves are very healthy and we will be able to use them with no worries. Also, if the govt PPR comes back higher than our very conservative budget this will not be an issue.
- A motion was made by Drew and seconded by Nikea to approve the preliminary adopted budget for 25-26 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

DEI Committee - Kenny Smith - Inform (6:55)

- Participants at the last DEI meeting went through an exercise to figure out whether compliance or non-compliance in this political climate is prudent. There is a proposal to change the DEI Committee to the Reach Together Committee. Kenny pointed out that there are 3 main differences between federal and state law- one pertaining to gender identity, one pertaining to Title IX, and guidance on racial discrimination.
- Katherine thanked the DEI Committee for their work. Emphasized that there needs to be clarity when talking about compliance/standing our ground. Encourages the Board to get clear on what we will be proposing, and what protocols to put in place for future issues.
- Ambar echoed thanks to the DEI Committee. Ambar requests that we operate with grace and patience. We don't want to create unnecessary chaos on top of the very real chaos that surrounds us outside. Encourages us to minimize chaos, unknown, anxiety, and to assume that we are operating with the best of intentions.
- Chris emphasized that we still have quite a lot of protections at the state and local level. At this moment we are only suggesting to change the name of the DEI Committee, which Chris says Reach Together aligns well with Reach Up Reach Out and Reach In committee.
- Heather said that while she was initially shocked and scared about the idea of the change, she now thinks that as long as our values are aligned she is on board.
- Drew cautions us against moving too fast and changing the name soon.
- Nikea suggested that making this decision to change the name right now feels reactive.
- Kenny said that it's better to change now than to have to quickly change at an urgent pace.
- Nikea and Annie asked about changing the name through the strategic plan. Asked about the timeline, Chris answered that this would occur in May.
- A discussion ensued about whether or not to wait to change the name of the DEI committee.
- No vote was taken

REACH UP Committee - Katherine Casey - Inform (7:27 pm)

- Please see the Board Packet for the presentation.
- HANE has a UIP, HASE does not.
- Both campuses have DEI goals.
- Data sources are STAR data, ANET data (HANE only), and Internal Teams Data (HASE only).
- HANE goals - 35% at or above grade level. Achieve an MGP of 45%. According to ANET data we are meeting or exceeding our goals, and our growth goals are on track.
- HASE goals - HASE math growth is dropping. Sarah mentioned that 100 new students were added this year which caused a drop as HASE is working on closing the gaps from these students. Reading goals are meeting/exceeding our current goals to raise black student growth.
- HASE Assessment goals moving forward - K-8 standards aligned. ID of the Pearson ProPL assessment. Pilot of assessment in Spring of 2025. Review assessment reports with teachers and REACH Up committee. HASE launch: Fall 2025.

Reach In Committee - Nikea - Inform (7:49 pm)

- Board Recruitment - Nikea encourages the Board to send any names of any potential recruits.
- Next month we will announce nominations for Executive Positions on the board. New officers will be voted on in May.

E.D. Update - Chris Ferris - Inform (7:54 pm)

- Strategic Plan - Education Partners will be doing teacher focus groups in the next few days. Parent focus groups will be led in 4 different languages.
- Building - Plumbing will be fixed during spring break and our permanent certificate of occupancy will happen very soon after that.
- DPS Board Meeting agenda for Middle School - we think we are on the agenda for April but unconfirmed.

Old Business - Chris Ferris - Inform (7:58 pm)

- \$9500 raised at Casino Night, we profited around \$3900. 90 people came.

Reminders/Announcements - Annie Bielecki - Inform (8:01 pm)

- Next BOD meeting: Monday April 28, 2025 6:15 pm at Highline Academy Northeast 19451 E Maxwell Pl Denver and [here via Zoom](#)

Adjournment -Ambar Suero - Adjourn Meeting - Vote (8:02 pm)

With no further business up for discussion, a motion was made by Catherine and seconded by Nikea to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.