

**Howard Gardner MI Charter School**  
**Public Board Meeting**  
Tuesday, September 17, 2024

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, September 17, 2024. Sam Ceccacci, President, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Sam led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance and took roll call for the board members and non-voting attendees.

The following Trustees attended: Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, Dino Galli, Michael Barbetti, Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe, Laurie Cadden, Mary Beth D’Andrea, Al Dorunda, Wayne Evans, Susan Hennemuth, and Dr. Fran Langan.

Also in attendance: Joe Ross, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; and Deana Bonacci, Assistant to the CEO.

Sam Ceccacci announced that there were no visitors present.

**I. Minutes** **Sam Ceccacci**  
Sam Ceccacci presented the August 20, 2024, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A MOTION to approve the August 20, 2024, Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Dino Galli and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. Sam asked if there were any comments or questions on the minutes. Not hearing any, Sam called for a vote. All Trustees voted to approve the August 20, 2024, minutes as submitted with no Trustees absent.

**II. President’s Report** **Sam Ceccacci**  
The new 2024-2025 school year began at HGMICS on August 26, 2024, with a full enrollment of 385 students and a full complement of teachers and instructional assistants. We wish all students, faculty, staff, administrators and parents a happy, healthy and prosperous school year filled with educational adventures and learning activities.  
But a successful start to the new school year doesn't happen without the advance preparation over the summer months that included a new Kindergarten Classroom, renovated spaces for Student Support, relocation of the Music Classroom, a STEAM and Academic Enrichment Classroom, and relocation of the Administrative Offices.  
There was a week of Pre-service Training for staff, a Parent Social on August 22, and a new agreement with NEPA Arts Alive to enable HGMICS to offer a performing arts program to our students. A grant from the Pa Commission on Crime will fund some mental health initiatives at the school.  
ReThink Ed Program is a Social Emotional Learning Curriculum that is new to the school and Fall Girls on the Run starts its second season at the school.  
With preparations complete, we start a new year filled with promise and hope for success for all! And let's not forget our Golf Tournament on October 13th at Pine Hills Golf Club to help fund various student initiatives.

**III. Finance/Facilities Committee** **Michael Barbetti**  
**1. August 2024 Financial Report** **John Marsico**  
John Marsico stated that the fiscal year-to-date revenues for the period ending 08/31/2024

were \$1,097,035 compared to \$ 972,778 for the period ending 8/31/2023. Fiscal year-to-date expenses for the period ending 08/31/2024 were \$789,184 compared to \$1,028,601 for the period ending 8/31/2023. The fiscal year-to-date Net Operating Income for the period ending 08/31/2024 was \$307,852, as compared to a Net Operating (Loss) of (\$55,824) for the period ending 8/31/2023.

The school had \$1,028,355 in cash as of 08/31/24 as compared to \$1,017,859 as of 08/31/2023. The balance in Due from Districts 2023-2024 of \$483,728 represents the amounts due to HGMICS from the 2023-2024 Reconciliations. Of this amount, \$390,641 is expected to be received in September 2024 from the Dunmore, Mid-Valley, North Pocono, and Scranton school districts via a Redirection payment. The balance in Construction In Progress of \$96,303 represents the construction cost of converting the old Music Cottage into our new Administration Building. This \$96,303 will be capitalized via a Journal Entry and depreciation will begin in September 2024. The outstanding loan balance after our August 2024 payment is \$4,190,271.

At this time, Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through August 31, 2024, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Wayne Evans and seconded by Al Dorunda. All Trustees voted to approve the August 2024 Financial Report, as presented, with no Trustees absent.

**2. HGMICS Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures**

**Michael Barbetti**

At this time, Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the revised HGMICS Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures as submitted. The motion was made by Wayne Evans and seconded by Al Dorunda. All Trustees voted to approve the revised HGMICS Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures, as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

**IV. Personnel Committee**

**Dino Galli**

Dino Galli stated the Personnel Committee met in September 2024 to discuss the draft CEO goals submitted by Joe Ross.

**V. Development Committee**

**Susan Hennemuth**

Susan Hennemuth stated that the Development Committee met on Wednesday, August 7, 2024. The Committee discussed the upcoming Annual Golf Tournament and the creation of an alumni event/fundraiser early in 2025.

**VII. School Matters**

**Joe Ross**

**1. Administrative Updates**

The students are back!! On August 26, 2024, we welcomed back our 385 students. HGMICS staff and vendors worked diligently over the summer break to prepare the school and grounds for the student expansion.

**School Reopening:**

We are excited to share that the 2024-2025 school year has started fantastically! The closing days of August were filled with anticipation as our staff completed final preparations for the school year, ensuring that our facilities and programs were ready for our students.

We're happy to report some exciting changes:

- **New Kindergarten Classroom:** Due to growing enrollment, we've added a third kindergarten classroom to better serve our youngest learners.
- **Renovated Spaces for Student Support:** We've completed renovations that provide dedicated areas for speech, Title, and intervention services, ensuring a better learning experience for students needing additional support.
- **Music Class Relocation:** Music class has been moved into the main building, and the old music cottage has been converted into administrative offices.
- **STEAM Classroom and Academic Enrichment Room:** The former board room has been reconfigured into a dynamic space dedicated to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) activities and academic enrichment.
- **Administrative Offices:** The new administration office opened, freeing up more educational space in the school
- **We have entered into an agreement with NEPA Arts Alive** to offer our students a performing arts program as part of our enrichment series.

In addition to these physical improvements, Principal McEnery and Director of Student Services Cathy Opshinsky led a comprehensive pre-service training for all staff, ensuring everyone was well-prepared for the year ahead.

One significant change this year was merging our Parent Forum Ice Cream Social with Curriculum Night, which was held on August 22, 2024. The event was a resounding success! Teachers and instructional assistants welcomed families into their classrooms, and we were thrilled with the fantastic turnout. It was a fun, informative evening, and we plan to continue this tradition annually.

### **First Days of School**

Classes began on Monday, August 26, and we are pleased with how smoothly the transition went, thanks to the hard work of our staff in addressing the increase in students and staff. However, we recognize that the first day of arrival and dismissal posed some challenges.

We quickly responded to these issues by making the following adjustments:

- **Arrival:** As of Wednesday, August 28, bus and van riders are dropped off at the Elm St. entrance while car riders continue to use the loop arrival door. This adjustment has successfully eliminated traffic backups on East Elm Street and improved the safety and order of our morning arrivals.
- **Dismissal:** Dismissal has also been modified. Bus riders are now picked up at the Elm St. entrance, van riders at the administration building, and car riders at the loop dismissal door. This change has streamlined the process, allowing for a smoother and more organized end to the school day.

- Lunch service: Lunch is going very well. However, the increase in students has caused us to explore purchasing 2 new folding cafeteria tables. Upon receipt, the addition of these tables will be helpful to our lunch service.

### **Enrollment**

HGMICS is at our full complement of students. Here is the grade breakdown.

- Kindergarten- 49 (One student from last year was retained)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade- 48
- 2<sup>Nd</sup> Grade- 48
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade- 48
- 4th Grade- 48
- 5th Grade- 36
- 6th Grade- 36
- 7th Grade- 35
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade- 37
- TOTAL STUDENTS- 385

There are 313 regular education students and 72 special education students. Close to 38% of our students are economically disadvantaged.

### **Personnel**

HGMICS has started the school year with a full complement of teachers and instructional assistants. All employees have completed all required training and have been successfully onboarded.

### **Golf Tournament**

The HGMICS golf tournament is scheduled for October 13<sup>th</sup> at Pine Hills Golf Club. Sponsorship and golfer registration forms are available on our website. We are actively promoting the tournament with our vendors, staff, families, and previous donors. Tournament sponsors will be acknowledged at the tournament, on our website, and across our various social media platforms. To date, we have received two \$1,500 donations, one from McKenna Snyder, our school counsel, and one as an anonymous donation. Currently, we have \$4,850 in sponsorships, \$600 in student 50/50 returns, and \$650 in employee 50/50 returns. Solicitation has just begun. Proceeds raised will benefit various student initiatives, including Positive Behavior Support and Systems (PBIS) rewards, STEAM field trips to Wilkes Barre Scranton Penguins and Railrider games for students, and various enrichment and student programs.

### **Grants**

HGMICS was just informed that we were awarded a \$70,000 Pa Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) grant for mental health initiatives at the school. This grant will partially offset the salary of our new school counselor and will be used to introduce restorative practices to our school.

Additionally, the school is preparing to submit another \$70,000 grant application to PCCD for physical security. We attended a webinar recently hosted by PCCD which will allow us to determine if the funding is appropriate for our school.

## **PRINCIPAL UPDATES – TreeAnne McEnery**

With three weeks into the 2024-2025 school year, I must reflect on how well the year has started! Our community, with its expansion and the arrival of over 100 new students and 15 new staff, has grown with grace and ingenuity only found at HGS. This growth is a testament to our shared commitment to education and our ability to welcome new members with open arms.

The Back-to-School Night, in partnership with Parent Forum's Ice Cream Social, was a resounding success. The positive feedback we received, including praise for time to meet students, families, and teachers before the first day of school, the event's organization, and the perfect duration of two hours, is a testament to the collective planning efforts of staff. The only significant change suggested was to spread out the information tables in the Link. In addition, I propose a map of the school to help families navigate to all the teachers and programs more easily and to start the event one hour earlier.

On September 3, the faculty engaged with parents in a Schoolwide Title I SPAC Discussion Board. Teachers and parents discussed 16 topics to better understand how each can support the other's goals to educate their children to be academically successful and, as I heard one parent share, engender kind individuals.

The Parent Forum held its first meeting on September 12 in the Link. Many returning and new families attended and expressed interest in serving the school. I shared information on PBIS and the Golf Tournament.

The annual Schoolwide Title I Family Engagement Meeting is scheduled for September 26. As a Title I recipient, this annual meeting is required to review what funding we receive and how that funding is used. Mrs. Brandy Dymond, one of the newly hired Reading and Mathematics Interventionists, will present on reading development at this year's meeting.

Some additional Schoolwide Title events coincide with already-scheduled schoolwide activities, such as the Parent Forum Trunk or Treat on October 27 and the Art Show on March 6. At each event, a Schoolwide Title teacher will be present to share in the activities of joy while teaching about reading and math.

On October 16, HGS Visual and Applied Arts Teacher Melissa Cruise and Instrumental Music Teacher Steve Kurilla, with six senior pod students, will attend a teacher student event, The Convening, at NEIU 19. This will be an incredible opportunity for teachers and students to share a space while expanding their artistic development and passions.

## **DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES UPDATES – Cathy Opshinsky**

**ReThink Ed** We are thrilled to introduce our new Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum, ReThink Ed SEL, through the Guidance Department. School Counselors Jade Flynn and Zach Kenney will deliver weekly guidance lessons across 17 classrooms, utilizing this evidence-based program.

The ReThinkEd SEL program aligns with the five core competencies of the CASEL framework—fostering self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Each competency is explored through a series of six engaging lesson topics, with responsible decision-making woven into every session. In addition, this curriculum will extend to our Tier 2 students,

offering specialized lessons for educational support groups to further enhance their social-emotional development.

**Fall Girls on the Run** We are excited to announce that Howard Gardner will be joining our second season of Girls on the Run, beginning September 18th! This after-school program is open to girls in grades 3-5 and will take place on Wednesdays and Thursdays, leading up to the end-of-season 5k on November 17th at Keystone College. Coached by Jade Flynn and Kathy Krall, the program combines physical activity with inspiring discussions, helping girls develop essential life skills, boost their confidence, and foster healthy relationships with their peers. We can't wait to see the impact this season will have!

### **DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS UPDATES – Patty Biko**

**Food Service** HGMICS current Economically Disadvantaged Rate is at 44.79%.  
The Food Service Dept served Breakfast 310 and Lunch 458 in the four school days of August.

**Transportation** HGMICS is currently provided with 5 Scranton buses, 1 Abington and 8 SD vans transporting students from the 13 school districts. 3 of the 5 Scranton buses are doing a run for the Scranton SD prior to coming to HGMICS in the afternoon causing slight delays by 15-20 minutes some days. The Abington SD is doing the same with the same cause. This is due to the driver shortages within the school districts.

District Transportation Student #'s:

Abington - 17

Scranton - 230

SD Vans - 35

**PIMS** The following collections have opened and started. The collections will remain open for the duration of the school year.

C6 Student Updates 2024-25

C6 Staff Updates 2024-25

C6 Teacher-Student Linkages 2024-25

Opening soon with a closed date of October 11th.

C1 Grad Drop Cohort 2023-24

C1 SPEC ED ACT 16 2023-24

C1 OCT Student 2024-25

C1 Title 3 Non-Pub Student 2024-25

C1 Staff Oct 2024-25

C1 Oct Prof Staff Vacancy 2024-25

C1 Act 35 2024-25

C1 EL Coordinator

### **IX. New Business**

**Sam Ceccacci**

At this time, Sam asked if there was any new business. Joe Ross, CEO, asked the Trustees for

approval of the school applying for membership to the PIAA.

Sam Ceccacci entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Chief Executive Officer of HGMICS to apply for the school's Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association membership. The motion was made by Wayne Evans and seconded by Mike Barbetti. All Trustees voted to approve the request to submit a PIAA application, with no Trustees absent.

Sam moved to the adjournment of the meeting.

### **Adjournment**

At this time, Sam Ceccacci called for a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. Laurie Cadden made the motion, and the Public Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

**Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, October 15, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.**