

- 1. Administrative Updates
- VIII. New Business
- Adjournment

Sam Ceccacci

Public Participation:

Mr. Ceccacci asked if anyone from the audience wanted to address the Board. There were zero comments.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: Approve the minutes from the October 21, 2025, HGMICS Board Meeting.

The motion was made by Dr. Fran Langan and seconded by Michael Barbetti.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

President’s Report:

President Sam Ceccacci delivered the following report:

This November Meeting finds Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School with positive news on the ratification of a new 2025-2026 State Budget after a four-plus-month delay and the positive completion of the school's 2024-2025 Annual Audit. The adoption of the Pa. State Budget means the Redirection Payments from Cooperating School Districts will soon be completed, and lines of credit can be closed.

Noteworthy in the Area of Academics, beginning of the year Benchmarks in Reading and Mathematics have been completed and show some positive changes over the benchmarks completed last year and our Grade 8 Team earned a first-place finish in the Scranton Prep Young Scholars Competition.

Thanks are extended to Peoples Security Bank for a \$15,000 Grant through Earned Income Tax Credits to be used by the School for STEAM-related Programs.

Since this Board is not scheduled to meet in December, at this time we would like to extend our wishes to students, staff, parents, and board members for a Happy Thanksgiving and a healthy and happy Holiday Season.

Finance Facilities Committee:

October 2025 Financial Report

Motion: Approve the Financial Report through October 31, 2025, as reported and submitted.

The motion was made by Judy Price and seconded by Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

HGMICS Right-to-Know Policy:

Motion: Approve the HGMICS Right-to-Know Policy as submitted.

The motion was made by Al Dorunda and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

HGMICS Personnel Committee:

Dino Galli stated the Personnel Committee met on October 4, 2025 to discuss the cost of Healthcare benefits for HGMICS employees. There was no Personnel Report to address.

HGMICS Academic Committee:

HGMICS Suicide Awareness Policy

Motion: Approve the updated HGMICS Suicide Awareness Policy as submitted.

The motion was made by Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe and seconded by Judy Price.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

HGMICS Development Committee:

Wayne Evans stated that the Development Committee met on November 5, 2025, and discussed options for hosting an annual fundraising event for the school. The Committee determined they would like this event to take place in the early months of the new year, possibly in February 2026, if any of the venues discussed were available.

School Matters:

Administrative Updates

The following Administrative Updates were submitted for November 2025:

CEO – Joe Ross

Annual Audit: The 2024-2025 annual audit has been completed. The final piece was a letter from Mckenna Snyder which was received and approved for inclusion in the final report. The final audit is on the Board drive. Many thanks to John Marsico for his work with Mr. Bill McGowan, from Brian Kelley & Associates LLC, for their work producing a clean audit with no

findings. John Marsico will begin work on the Annual Finance Report (AFR) submission to PDE. Income tax form 990 will be prepared for by our auditing firm.

GRANTS-EITC: We received a \$15,000 grant from Commonwealth Charitable Foundation, affiliated with Peoples Security Bank. This contribution will be used for STEAM related programming which includes our after-school enrichment and competition teams. John Marsico and I participated in the donation event held at Peoples Security’s corporate offices.

Line of Credit- As approved at the last BOT, we closed on an extension on our line of credit. This will provide financial resources projected through the end of March 2026. On 11-12-25, the media reported the Pa Budget has been passed. Once the redirection payment is scheduled, we will take steps to close out the line of credit and pay all related fees.

Right to Know Law Responses- We have been inundated with over 40 Right to Know Law Requests over the past 30 days. We are working with our legal team to respond to each one. This cumbersome process has been a drain on personnel and shows no signs of letting up. Our attorneys are providing guidance so we continue to follow the law and adhere to all required deadlines.

Principal – TreeAnne McEnery

The first trimester of the 2025–2026 school year has been marked by academic success, student engagement, and meaningful connections within and beyond our community. Beginning-of-year benchmark results in reading and mathematics have been analyzed and will inform instructional planning, intervention support, and enrichment opportunities throughout the coming months.

Equally exciting has been our schoolwide commitment to celebrating creativity, global awareness, and social-emotional learning. This report highlights academic data, student accomplishments, staff professional development, and upcoming events that reflect the school’s mission to nurture the multiple intelligences of all learners.

Academic Highlights

Beginning-of-Year Benchmark Results

Reading and Mathematics benchmarks have been administered for all K–8 students. Results show strong progress in both subjects and provide valuable insight into growth areas that will guide our Schoolwide Title I MTSS framework. Full data attached for review.

Snapshot of the 2025 BOY Reading and Math Performance Comparison: 2024 vs. 2025

<i>Reading BOY Performance Level</i>	2024	2025	Change
Well Below	14% (44)	12% (39)	▼ 2%

Below	16% (50)	16% (54)	—
At	33% (102)	39% (127)	▲ 6%
Above	37% (116)	33% (106)	▼ 4%
<i>Mathematics BOY</i> Performance Level	2024 (K–3)	2025 (K–3)	Change
Well Below	7% (13)	16% (31)	▲ 9%
Below	60% (116)	14% (27)	▼ 46%
At	33% (64)	26% (51)	▼ 7%
Above	Not Reported	44% (86)	—

Student Enrichment & Achievements

Global Collaboration: Uganda and Spain Partnership

Students in Grades 1–8 will participate in an international collaboration with partner schools in Uganda and Spain, sharing the spirit of the winter holiday season through creative and cultural exchange. Each specials teacher will lead a component of the project:

- Art: Students will design and mail artistic postcards featuring winter themes and cultural symbols.
- World Language: Students will write holiday greetings in English and the language of the partner school.
- Physical Education and Music: Students will record and share videos of popular games and musical performances, which will be uploaded to YouTube for exchange.

In return, our partner schools abroad will share videos and images showcasing their own cultural celebrations, traditions, and games, giving HGS students a meaningful window into global community and diversity.

High School Readiness Presentations

Representatives from Holy Cross High School and Scranton Preparatory School met with our Senior Pod students to discuss high school programs, course pathways, and extracurricular opportunities, helping them prepare for the next step in their academic journey.

Fire Safety Presentation (Grades K–4)

The Scranton Fire Department provided engaging, age-appropriate fire safety sessions for our youngest students, promoting awareness of emergency response and home safety practices.

Schoolwide Unity Day

On National Unity Day, all students and staff wore orange to stand together in promoting kindness, inclusion, and unity. The event aligned with our PBIS and SEL goals, reinforcing the importance of respect and empathy across the school community.

Scranton Prep Young Scholars Competition

Congratulations to our Grade 8 team, who earned First Place in the Scranton Prep Young Scholars Competition! Their performance showcased exceptional teamwork, academic skill, and creativity—an impressive representation of HGS’s commitment to excellence.

Professional Development

October Staff In-Service

Our annual October Staff In-Service included a professional training session led by the Children’s Advocacy Center, titled “*From Darkness to Light.*” All instructional staff received training on child safety awareness, reporting procedures, and advocacy, ensuring ongoing compliance with state mandates and reinforcing our culture of care.

University Partnerships

Marywood University Collaboration

HGS continues its partnership with Marywood University’s Education Department and will host approximately 30 teacher candidates during the Spring 2026 semester for practicum experiences in grades K–4. This collaboration provides authentic field experiences for university students while enhancing our own classrooms with additional learning support and energy.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

Basketball Playoffs

Our Girls’ and Boys’ Basketball Teams will compete in the regional playoffs, scheduled for November 17–19. We commend our student-athletes and coaches for their dedication, teamwork, and school spirit.

Family and Community Engagement

Winter Celebration and Community Giving Event

On December 5th at 5:00 p.m., the Collaborative Community Events Committee will host our annual Winter Celebration. The event will feature contributions from the Title I Program, Parent Forum, and Wellness Committee, with crafts, games, and refreshments for families.

In alignment with our schoolwide mission of service, the evening will include a community collection of gift cards and dry goods for The Heart of Scranton, supporting local families in need during the holiday season.

Looking Ahead

- **December:** Winter Celebration and continued benchmark data review
- **January:** Mid-year assessments and Grade 8 NAEP preparation and National School Choice Week.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Board of Trustees for their continued support and leadership.

Director of Student Services – Cathy Opshinsky

STEM and Career Exploration Day

On October 17, thirty-one students attended Lackawanna College for their STEM and Career Exploration Day. Students created a monthly budget in a game of "Life." When creating their budgets, students had to choose careers, family size, housing, utilities, entertainment, clothing, food, pets, insurance, transportation, and unexpected life events. Students then went upstairs to explore all of the education programs available at Lackawanna College, many of which had hands-on activities for the students to explore.

Aavidum Student Leadership Summit

On Tuesday, October 28th, twelve of Howard Gardner School's 7th and 8th grade student leaders participated in the regional Aavidum Student Leadership Summit held at Old Forge High School. This event hosted by NEIU 19 brought together over a hundred students from a dozen school districts across Lackawanna, Susquehanna, and Wayne Counties. HGS was one of only two Middle Schools participating with the rest all area High Schools. Aavidum, established by students at a Pennsylvania high school and now represented in hundreds of schools across the nation, is a student-led initiative committed to creating supportive school communities by raising awareness and reducing the stigma surrounding mental health. The name, derived from Latin roots and coined by the founding students, translates to "I've got your back." Aavidum's mission is to promote open communication and peer support by cultivating a positive school culture built upon four guiding pillars: acceptance of all students, acknowledgment of their needs, appreciation of their challenges, and care demonstrated through action. Throughout the day, our students heard engaging presentations on youth mental health and learned from other schools' Aavidum programs to help guide and inspire our newly formed club. Our twelve founding Aavidum members represented Howard Gardner School with pride—actively participating in small group breakout sessions and volunteering contributions during the large-group presentations. HGS students and staff advisors, Middle School Counselor Zach Kenney and School Social Worker Megan Boettcher, returned with enthusiasm and motivation to bring Aavidum's message of acceptance, acknowledgement, appreciation, and care to promote student mental wellness to our school community.

Director of Operations – Patty Mickavicz

Staff Flu Vaccination Clinic

We held our first Staff Flu Vaccination Clinic to promote employee health and reduce seasonal illness. The event was well received, with many staff members expressing appreciation for the convenience of having the clinic held at the school. Based on the positive feedback, we plan to make this an annual event, scheduling it earlier in the season, at the beginning of October.

NSLP Verification

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Verification process was completed in October in accordance with federal and state guidelines. The verification sample was selected and reviewed to ensure accuracy and compliance with eligibility requirements for free and reduced-price meal applications. All necessary documentation was collected and verified, with results submitted through the PEARS system prior to the established deadline.

Food Service

The Domino’s Smart Slice program has been a significant success, with 167 orders placed prior to the deadline. Students have responded positively to this new offering and look forward to participating again later in the month. The program is fully compliant with all NSLP nutritional standards and is reimbursable, resulting in no additional cost to families. Participation is managed through a pre-order process, with Domino’s providing delivery during students’ scheduled lunch periods.

November 2025 Enrollment by District

<u>School District</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>SPED</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>SD %</u>
Abington Heights	13	5	18	4.58%
Dunmore*	7	4	11	2.80%
Lackawanna Trail	3	0	3	0.76%
Lakeland	1	0	1	0.25%
Mid Valley*	5	0	5	1.27%
North Pocono*	3	1	4	1.02%
Old Forge*	2	1	3	0.76%
Pittston Area	2	1	3	0.76%
Riverside	4	1	5	1.27%

Scranton*	259	72	331	84.22%
Tunkhannock	3	0	3	0.76%
Valley View	4	0	4	1.02%
Wyoming Area	2	0	2	0.51%
Total	308	85	393	100%

**Redirection*

Director of Human Resources and Enrollment – Renee Dougherty

Employee Health Care Benefits

Scott Robinson from Quantas Advisors initiated the annual renewal process for employee health care benefits by requesting a renewal proposal from Geisinger. Geisinger returned with a 55% increase in premiums, which was not a viable option.

Following this, Scott obtained competitive bids from Aetna and Highmark. The only feasible proposal received was from Highmark, which presented a 24.9% increase in premiums. However, additional savings are anticipated due to changes in the structure of the employee health reimbursement arrangement (HRA).

This past year, the HRA account cost approximately \$54,000. Highmark has recommended implementing a Gap Plan in place of the HRA. The Gap Plan would cover the employee’s \$4,000 deductible at a cost of \$48.20 per year per employee, which would be paid by the employee rather than the school. This change eliminates the school’s annual HRA expense while still providing deductible protection for employees.

As part of the renewal, the employee contribution per paycheck will increase from \$15 to \$20.

Overall, the move to Highmark with the recommended plan adjustments offers the most cost-effective and sustainable option for maintaining quality employee health coverage.

New Business:

Third-Party Funded Special Needs Trust Agreement

Motion: The Board of Trustees hereby approves the motion for the resolution of the Third-Party Funded Special Needs Trust Agreement. The motion was made by Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan. All Trustees present voted yes, with two Trustees absent.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.