

**The Public Board of Trustees meeting of the Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School was held on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.**

In the absence of Sam Ceccacci, Board President, Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, Board Vice President, welcomed visitors. The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m.

The group joined in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:**

Sam Ceccacci, President	Absent	Mary Beth D’Andrea	Present
Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, Vice President	Present	Al Dorunda	Present
Dino Galli, Secretary	Present	Wayne Evans	Present
Michael Barbetti, Treasurer	Absent	Dr. Fran Langan	Present
Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe	Absent	Judy Price	Present
Laurie Cadden	Present		
<u>Staff</u>	<u>Non-Voting:</u>		
Joe Ross, CEO	Present		
TreeAnne McEnery, Principal	Present		
John Marsico, Business Manager	Present		
Deana Bonacci, Asst. to the CEO	Present		

Nine (8) Trustees present, three (3) absent.

**January 2026 Public Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda:**

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

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Visitors may provide comment on items listed on the agenda. Names and School District of residence will be recorded before remarks are made.

I.	Approval of November 18, 2025 Minutes	Sam Ceccacci
II.	President’s Report	Sam Ceccacci
III.	Finance/Facilities Committee	Michael Barbetti
	1. December 2025 Financial Report	John Marsico
	2. HGMICS Certified School Nurse Oversight Agreement	Joe Ross
IV.	Personnel Committee	Dino Galli
V.	Academic Committee	Dr. Catherine
	1. HGMICS Special Education Policy	Richmond-Cullen
VI.	School Matters	Joe Ross

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

Sam Ceccacci

**Public Participation:**

Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen asked if anyone from the audience wanted to address the Board. There were zero comments.

**Approval of Minutes:**

*Motion: Approve the minutes from the November 18, 2025, HGMICS Board Meeting.*

The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Dino Galli.

All Trustees voted Yes with 8 Trustees present.

**President's Report:**

On behalf of Sam Ceccacci, Dr. Catherine-Richmond Cullen delivered the following President's report:

After the holiday break, Howard Gardner students and staff returned to school on Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, to begin the '26 phase of the 2025-2026 school year with 394 students enrolled. While the weather and power outages have played havoc with the school calendar, we hope to enjoy fewer interruptions as the school year progresses.

A new Health Care Plan for staff has been successfully introduced and implemented.

The Academic Committee was briefed regarding a highly successful Transition Cyclical Monitoring, Outpatient Therapy Services, and Special Education Policy, which was to be presented to the full Board at the Work Session earlier this evening.

All required state and federal reports for 2024-2025 have been submitted and approved.

Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan Performance Results have exceeded the established goals in several areas. Schoolwide Title IIA Performance Outcomes reflect progress toward the goals established in the Comprehensive Plan.

On the schedule are several student competitions focusing on expanding access to STEAM programming for middle school students. National School Choice Week is January 26-30, 2026, and the annual Open House is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 6:00 PM.

Also, the enrollment lottery for the 2026-2027 school year opened on January 1, 2026.

**Finance Facilities Committee:**

**December 2025 Financial Report**

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

The motion was made by Judy Price and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan.

All Trustees voted Yes with 8 Trustees present.

**HGMICS Certified School Nurse Oversight Agreement:**

*Motion: Approve the HGMICS Certified School Nurse Agreement as submitted.*

The motion was made by Judy Price and seconded by Wayne Evans.

All Trustees voted Yes with 8 Trustees present.

**HGMICS Personnel Committee:**

Dino Galli, Chair, stated that the Personnel Committee met on January 5, 2026, to discuss items in the January Personnel Activity Report. New Personnel activity included the resignation of the school nurse, Ms. Jennifer Jaffe, and hiring Ms. Katlynn Battenberg, Licensed Practical Nurse, at an annual salary of \$31,000. Dino stated that the hiring of Ms. Battenberg is being brought to the full Board tonight for approval. Also discussed at the committee meeting was renewal of contracts for the School Principal, Ms. TreeAnne McEnery, and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Joseph Ross. Contracts will be reviewed and updated in the coming weeks, and if completed, brought to the full Board of Trustees as motions for approval at the March Board meeting.

*Motion: Approve the January 2026 Personnel Activity Report as submitted with the hiring of Ms. Katlynn Battenberg, Licensed Practical Nurse, at an annual salary of \$31,000.*

The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan.

All Trustees voted Yes with 8 Trustees present.

**HGMICS Academic Committee:**

Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, Chair, stated that the Academic Committee met on January 5, 2026, and discussed Transitional Cyclical Monitoring, Outpatient Therapy Services, and the results of the 2024-2025 Federal Program Performance Reports for Title I, Title IIA, and Title IVA. The Committee also reviewed the Special Education Policy, which is a motion for approval at tonight's Board meeting.

**HGMICS Special Education Policy**

*Motion: Approve the HGMICS Special Education Policy as submitted.*

The motion was made by Dr. Fran Langan and seconded by Judy Price.

All Trustees voted Yes with 8 Trustees present.

## **School Matters:**

### **Administrative Updates**

*The following Administrative Updates were submitted for January 2026:*

#### **CEO – Joe Ross**

Happy New Year! The students and staff returned to school on January 5, 2026, and are in the process of reacclimating themselves to the school day. December was an eventful month at the school. The staff celebrated our traditional 12 days of holiday cheer.

On December 18, 2025, the school hosted our annual winter concert at St. Stanislaus. The concert was a rousing success! This year, we added a chorus component comprising two age-based groups. The attendance exceeded 350 people. Earlier in December, the HGS Parent Forum held its annual Winter Festival, to which students and families were invited. The HGS band also performed at this event.

Winter athletics is in full action. Our boys' and girls' 7th/8th-grade teams are representing HGMICS on the playing court. Home games are also played at St. Stanislaus. These games also give our 7th- and 8th-grade cheer teams an opportunity to perform. Additionally, our pep squad has attended and performed. The money from admissions and the thriving concession stand has allowed us to defray the gymnasium's rental expenses.

Consistent with our charter as a multiple-intelligence school, we continue to expand the volume of experiential learning opportunities for our students.

The month was challenging, and we used all our allotted inclement-weather days. Unfortunately, we had two community-wide power outages that necessitated closing the school for the day. The positive aspect was that the outage situation allowed us to implement emergency procedures to dismiss the students. The first outage occurred at approximately 8:25 a.m. The administration and staff followed evacuation plans, and all students were safely and efficiently dismissed within ninety minutes of the outage. The second outage occurred at 7:30 a.m., and we utilized our emergency communication system to inform the school community that we were closed. This was seamless. Although the outages caused a major disruption to the school, both events allowed us to identify, address, and improve gaps in our response.

**Grants** On January 6, 2026, we were notified that our ERC Refund application had been approved. We received a refund of \$451,336.61, resulting in a net unbudgeted revenue of \$338,502.45. This is a significant financial boost to the school.

HGMICS received a \$4,300 donation from the Scranton Educational Improvement Organization. This money will be used to enhance our students' reading comprehension.

### **PDE 363**

We received notification from the Scranton School District that the special education rate is being increased. This positive result will increase revenues for the remainder of the school year. The precise implications are still being finalized.

**Principal – TreeAnne McEnery**

**PDE State-Required and Federal Program Compliance**

In alignment with PDE accountability requirements, ESSA, and the Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan Goals, all required state and federal reports for 2024-2025 have been submitted and approved.

Reports include:

- Civics Knowledge Survey (Act 35)
- Educator Effectiveness Annual Report.
- Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan
- Schoolwide Title I Performance Reports
  - Title IA (Student Achievement and Interventions)
  - Title IIA (Professional Learning and Development)
  - Title IVA (Well-Rounded Education)

These submissions demonstrate continued compliance with PDE and Federal monitoring expectations.

**Schoolwide Title I Comprehensive Plan Performance Results**

The results of the Schoolwide **Title IA Performance Outcomes** reflect progress toward Comprehensive Plan Goals. The following are the goals and the final performance.

- Goal Statement: Students in grades 4 through 8 will increase achievement in reading comprehension by 4% on the 2025 PSSA.
  - Goal Outcome: *The 2025 ELA PSSA results indicate that students in grades 4–8 achieved a cumulative gain of +20 percentage points in reading comprehension text-dependent analysis, exceeding the established goal of a 4-percentage-point increase. This is +16 pp above goal.*
- Goal Statement: Students in grade 4 will increase achievement in fractional reasoning by 2% on the 2025 PSSAs.
  - Goal Outcome: *The 2025 PSSA Mathematics data show a 18-percentage-point decline in Grade 4 fractional reasoning, indicating that the goal of a 2-percentage point increase was not met and highlighting the need for targeted instructional supports.*
- Goal Statement: Students in grades 4 & 8 will increase achievement in the physical sciences by 5% on the 2025 PSSAs.

- Goal Outcome: *This goal did not obtain data due to the Pennsylvania Department of Education not releasing the 2025 PSSA science results due to piloting new standards on the assessment.*

The results of the Schoolwide **Title IIA Performance Outcomes** reflect progress toward Comprehensive Plan Goals. The following are the goals and the final performance.

- Goal Statement: The STEAM Program Coordinator will complete a PDE STEM Endorsement Program by June 2025, which will allow for the implementation of an Advanced Academic Enrichment program as part of the schoolwide Title I and MTSS services and the infusion of STEAM activities K-8.
  - Goal Outcome: *The PDE STEM Endorsement Program was successfully completed by June 2025, resulting in the full implementation of Advanced Academic Enrichment (AAE) as part of the schoolwide Title I and MTSS services and the integration of STEAM activities across grades K-8.*
- Goal Statement: The mathematics department will participate in OGAP courses and PDE-sponsored professional development from July 2024 through June 2025 to increase student performance on benchmarks and PSSAs.
  - Goal Outcome: *All mathematics department and special education teachers participated in OGAP courses and PDE sponsored professional development; however, projected gains were not met on standardized assessments.*
    - While projected gains were not met on standardized assessments, achievement and growth are evident in teacher confidence, instructional flexibility, understanding of mathematical concepts and assessments, in addition to classroom evidence of student achievement and growth on benchmarking and curriculum-based assessments.

The results of the Schoolwide **Title IVA Performance Outcomes** reflect progress toward Comprehensive Plan Goals. The following are the goals and the final performance.

- Goal Statement: Students in grades 5-8 will access instrumental music outside of the general classroom experience through continuous enrollment in the after-school program 2024-2025. The school seeks to increase enrollment from 30 students by adding 10 more students.
  - Goal Outcome: *During the 2024-2025 school year, students in grades 5-8 accessed instrumental music beyond the general classroom through continuous enrollment in the after-school band program. Enrollment increased from a baseline of 30 students to a total of 56 students. This exceeded the goal of adding 10 students, resulting in a net gain of 26 students. We made substantial progress.*
- Goal Statement: Students in grades 3-8 will participate in an after-school performing arts program to enhance their creativity, speech articulation, and use of multiple intelligences. We seek to enroll 15 students from a baseline of 0.
  - Goal Outcome: *Students in grades 3-8 successfully participated in the after-school performing arts program, resulting in two student performances. Enrollment exceeded the original target of 15 students, with 48 students*

*participating in the first performance and 27 students participating in the second performance, demonstrating strong student engagement and expanded opportunities to enhance creativity, speech articulation, and the use of multiple intelligences. We made substantial progress.*

These performance results are being used to inform instructional decision-making, professional development planning, and refinement of interventions in accordance with continuous improvement expectations.

## **Student Competitions**

Consistent with the school's strategic focus of expanding access to STEAM programming, middle school students will participate in the following competitions:

- *Future City Competition* Radnor, PA – January 24, 2026
- *STEM Design Challenge* Johnson College – January 28, 2026
- *Keystone Hack-a-Thon Competition* Two teams participating (Upper School and Seniors)
- *Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science (PJAS)* 19 students participating

These opportunities directly support HGS' mission as well as PDE's emphasis on career readiness, problem-solving, collaboration, and applied learning.

## **National School Choice Week and Family Engagement**

- National School Choice Week: January 26–30, 2026
- Annual Open House: Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 6:00 PM

These events align with the school's strategic goal of strengthening school–family–community partnerships and enrollment outreach.

## **Inclement Weather School Calendar Update**

In accordance with PDE attendance requirements, the school has exhausted all designated snow days. If additional inclement weather closures are required, the following calendar adjustments will be implemented in sequence:

1. June 4 – Full day of school  
June 5 – Half-day of school
2. April 6 – Full day of school
3. April 3 – Half-day of school

Timely communication has been provided to staff and families should calendar adjustments be enacted.

## **Middle-of-Year Benchmarking, Timelines, and MTSS Implementation**

Middle-of-Year (MOY) benchmarking is currently underway in:

- Reading
- Mathematics
- Social-Emotional Learning

Timelines Benchmarking completion by January 20, 2026

MOY intervention schedules active by January 26, 2026

**Director of Student Services – Cathy Opshinsky**

### **Implementation of School-Based Trauma Therapy Program**

Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School is proud to announce the implementation of a school-based trauma therapy program to be delivered by School Social Worker, Megan Boettcher, LCSW, C-SSWS, DCSW, utilizing Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT).

TF-CBT is widely recognized as the gold standard, evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents who have experienced trauma. It has consistently demonstrated strong empirical support for reducing posttraumatic stress symptoms, depression, and behavioral difficulties across diverse populations. The structured yet flexible framework of TF-CBT allows for seamless integration within the school setting—enhancing accessibility, promoting early intervention, and providing consistent, high-quality care within an environment familiar and safe to students.

Megan holds a Master of Social Work from Marywood University and two Post-Master’s Graduate Certificates: Child/Adolescent Mental Health from Rutgers University School of Social Work and Trauma Intervention with Children and Adolescents from the University of Maryland Baltimore School of Social Work. She is also certified through the Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy National Therapist Certification Program—one of only five therapists in Lackawanna County to hold this credential.

The addition of this service aligns with the school’s commitment to fostering equitable access to mental health care by reducing barriers to treatment such as transportation challenges, scheduling conflicts, and community resource limitations. By offering trauma therapy directly within the school, students are supported in an environment that is both physically and emotionally safe, promoting healing, resilience, and academic success.

### **LRJ Foundation Student Presentations – Grades 3–8**

On November 7th, the LRJ Foundation visited Howard Gardner School to deliver age-appropriate mental health and wellness presentations to students in grades 3–8. The LRJ Foundation has partnered with schools across the region since 2012 to support student emotional well-being and develop lifelong skills in resilience, empathy, and positive mental health.

Students participated in interactive sessions tailored to their developmental level.

- Grades 3–4 focused on emotional awareness, empathy, communication, and building healthy peer relationships.
- Grades 5–8 focused on mental health awareness, stress management, emotional regulation, and developing a positive and resilient mindset.

The feedback from staff and students was positive, and the sessions supported our ongoing efforts to promote social-emotional learning, emotional safety, and mental wellness within our school community.

### **Director of Operations – Patty Mickavicz**

#### **Food Service**

The Pennsylvania state budget for FY 2025–2026 has been finalized, allowing the release of funds through the USDA Local Foods for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program. Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School, as a participating School Food Authority (SFA), has received \$3,000.00 to support the purchase of locally sourced foods for school meals.

#### **January 2026 Enrollment by District**

<u>School District</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>SPED</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>SD %</u>
Abington Heights	12	6	18	4.63%
Carbondale	1	0	1	0.26%
Dunmore*	6	4	10	2.57%
Lackawanna Trail	1	0	1	0.26%
Lakeland	1	0	1	0.26%
Mid Valley*	6	0	6	1.54%
North Pocono*	3	2	5	1.29%
Old Forge*	2	1	3	0.77%
Pittston Area	2	1	3	0.77%
Riverside	4	1	5	1.29%
Scranton*	256	73	329	84.58%
Tunkhannock	1	0	1	0.26%

Valley View	4	0	4	1.03%
Wyoming Area	1	0	1	0.26%
Wyoming Valley West*	1	0	1	0.26%
Total	301	88	389	100%

\*Redirection

**2025-26 rates based on PDE-363s received by PDE**

School District	2025-26 Nonspecial Education Expenditure per ADM For all charter schools	2025-26 Special Education Expenditure per ADM For all brick and mortar CSs
Abington Heights SD	\$12,821.50	\$26,636.04
Carbondale Area SD	\$10,694.17	\$31,012.09
Dunmore SD	\$13,588.20	\$31,896.54
Lackawanna Trail SD	\$17,555.85	\$43,719.16
Lakeland SD	\$13,455.64	\$43,719.16
Mid Valley SD	\$11,471.94	\$29,809.04
North Pocono SD	\$16,321.68	\$32,219.60
Old Forge SD	\$9,764.04	\$41,520.06
Pittston Area SD	\$12,891.29	\$28,101.37
Riverside SD	\$-	\$-
Scranton SD	\$13,801.21	\$37,304.08
Tuckhannock Area SD	\$17,700.99	\$43,911.54
Valley View SD	\$13,174.47	\$33,122.15
Wyoming Area SD	\$14,680.26	\$32,972.84
Wyoming Valley West SD	\$10,759.62	\$35,371.41

Submission of form PDE-363, Funding for Charter Schools, is now annually required by all school districts. Pursuant to section 1725-A(a)(7), each school district must submit a PDE-363 for the current school year to PDE by November 1.

**Admissions**

The online admissions portal opened to the public and current families on January 1. The admissions process is conducted electronically through the School Information System, allowing families to submit applications efficiently and securely.

**Director of Human Resources and Enrollment – Renee Dougherty**

**Enrollment:**

Current enrollment stands at 394 students, reflecting the withdrawal of two students from one family. Families with students next on the waitlist have been contacted regarding available enrollment opportunities.

**2026–2027 Enrollment Lottery:**

The enrollment lottery for the 2026–2027 school year opened on January 1, 2026. Current families were notified regarding both the upcoming lottery and the re-enrollment process for returning students. As of January 11th, 110 applications have been received.

**School Nurse Coverage:**

Efforts to hire a permanent School Nurse are ongoing. In the interim, oversight coverage is being provided by Megan McCabe, Certified School Nurse (CSN), to ensure continuity of health services.

**Employee Benefits:**

Open enrollment concluded, and employee benefit cards have been received.

**New Business:**

There was no New Business at this time.

**Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Laurie Cadden. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

***Next Meeting Date: February 17, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.***