

The Public Board of Trustees meeting of the Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School was held on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. virtually via Webinar. Public Notice was provided prior to the change in the Board meeting start time. Members of the Public could attend the virtual meeting by requesting the meeting link as per instructions in the Public Notice and instructions provided on the School’s website homepage.

Sam Ceccacci, Board President, welcomed visitors. The meeting was called to order at 9:17 a.m.

The group joined in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Sam Ceccacci, President	Present	Mary Beth D’Andrea	Absent
Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, Vice President	Present	Al Dorunda	Present
Dino Galli, Secretary	Present	Wayne Evans	Present
Michael Barbetti, Treasurer	Present	Dr. Fran Langan	Present
Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe	Present	Judy Price	Absent
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		

Eight (9) Trustees present, three (2) absent.

March 2026 Public Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda:

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

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

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|------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| I. | Approval of February 17, 2026 Minutes | Sam Ceccacci |
| II. | President’s Report | Sam Ceccacci |
| III. | Finance/Facilities Committee | Michael Barbetti |
| | 1. February 2026 Financial Report | |
| | 2. Adoption of Community Eligibility Provision | |
| | 3. HGMICS Boiler Replacement Agreement | |
| | 4. Flexible Instruction Days for the 2026-2027 School Year | |

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| IV. | Personnel Committee | Dino Galli |
| | 1. March 2026 Personnel Activity Report | |
| | 2. Chief Executive Officer Employment Agreement and Job Description | |
| | 3. Principal Employment Agreement and Job Description | |
| | 4. Director of Student Services Employment Agreement and Job Description | |
| V. | Academic Committee | Dr. Catherine
Richmond-Cullen |
| VI. | School Matters | Joe Ross |
| | 1. Administrative Updates | |
| VII. | New Business | Sam Ceccacci |
| | Adjournment | |

Public Participation:

Sam 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 February 17, 2026, 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:

Sam Ceccacci delivered the following President’s report:

March has brought us to the end of Trimester II at Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School. While we have previously opted to not use Flexible Instruction Days at Howard Gardner, inclement weather and power outages have forced us to reapply for those Flexible Instruction Days in order to meet Pa. Department of Education requirements for number of school days/hours of annual instruction.

Planning and budget development activities have begun for the 2026-2027 annual budget. It is expected that a draft budget will be presented to the Finance/Facilities Committee when it next meets in April.

Administrative Contracts are due for renewal and were discussed at both the Personnel and Finance/Facilities Meetings and are presented tonight for approval.

Information on the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) covering free breakfast and lunch for all students was presented to the Finance/Facilities Committee and is presented tonight for Board approval along with an agreement with Keystone Control regarding upcoming school renovations.

With regard to the Academic Committee, Ms. TreeAnne McEnery, School Principal, has provided information on integrating STEAM across all school levels for the 2026-2027 school year.

Finally, the Howard Gardner Enrollment Lottery was held on Wednesday, March 11, 2026 and is available for view as a webinar. Having had an opportunity to view the lottery in person with Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, Vice President, recognition must go to all of the staff members who worked so hard to make it a success.

Finance Facilities Committee:

February 2026 Financial Report

Motion: Approve the Financial Report through February 28, 2026, as reported and submitted.

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

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

Adoption of Community Eligibility Provision

Motion: Approve the adoption of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) that will provide free breakfast and lunch for all enrolled students for the 2026-2027 school year.

The **MOTION** was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

HGMICS Boiler Replacement Agreement

Motion: Authorization of HGMICS to enter into an agreement with Keystone Control Corporation for the replacement of the school's boiler system in an amount not to exceed \$197,000.

The **MOTION** was made by Dino Galli and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

Flexible Instruction Days for the 2026-2027 School Year

Motion: Approve the adoption and use of Flexible Instruction Days (FIDs) for the 2026-2027 school year, in accordance with guidelines established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

The **MOTION** was made by Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen and seconded by Laurie Cadden.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

HGMICS Personnel Committee:

Dino Galli, Chair, stated that the Personnel Committee met on March 3, 2026, and discussed the renewal of contracts for the School Principal, Ms. TreeAnne McEnery, and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Joseph Ross at five-year term agreements instead of the previous three-year term agreements. A contract has also been established for Ms. Catherine Opshinky, Director of Student Services, for a five-year term agreement at Howard Gardner. The contracts are being

brought as motions before the full Board of Trustees at today's meeting. The March Personnel Activity Report was discussed and personnel matters regarding a termination of employment for one of the school's teaching positions as well as the leave(s) of absence by three employees will begin over the following months.

March 2026 Personnel Activity Report

Motion: Approve the March 2026 Personnel Activity Report as submitted.

The **MOTION** was made by Wayne Evans and seconded by Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

Chief Executive Officer Employment Agreement and Job Description

Motion: Approve the CEO Employment Agreement with Joseph Ross to extend his service as Chief Executive Officer for the Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School for the five-year period from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2031.

The **MOTION** was made by Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan.

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

Principal Employment Agreement and Job Description

Motion: Approve the Principal Employment Agreement with TreeAnne McEnery to extend her service as Principal for the Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School for the five-year period from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2031.

The **MOTION** was made by Michael Barbetti and seconded by Wayne Evans.

Director of Student Services Employment Agreement and Job Description

Motion: Approve the Director of Student Services Employment Agreement with Cathy Opshinsky to extend her service as the Director of Student Services for the Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School for the five-year period from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2031.

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

All Trustees voted Yes with 9 Trustees present.

HGMICS Academic Committee:

Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, Chair, stated that the Academic Committee met on March 3, 2026, and discussed K-8 STEAM.

School Matters:

Administrative Updates

The following Administrative Updates were submitted for March 2026:

CEO – Joe Ross

Enrollment Lottery

On March 11, 2026, the school successfully conducted the 2026-2027 enrollment lottery. This event is available for public view as a webinar. During the early portion of the lottery, there were over 185 participants on the webinar. All available seats were filled in kindergarten, and every other grade level has a waiting list that will be used to fill any openings that occur.

Congratulations to Principal TreeAnne McEnery, who presided over the lottery, Mrs. Renee Dougherty, Mrs. Patty Mickavicz, who both managed and oversaw the enrollment process, Mr. Matthew Snyder, who provided technical support, and Ms. Deana Bonacci, Mrs. Mykenna Dolph, and Mrs. Diane Carey, who monitored and responded to any questions or issues that arose during the lottery.

Email notifications have been sent to all applicants notifying them of the results of the lottery. Accepted families now must submit final paperwork and accept the seat placement. Preparations are underway to organize kindergarten screening which will occur in late May.

2026-2027 Budget Process

Mr. John Marsico, Business Manager, has begun the arduous task of preparing the 2026-2027 HGMICS budget. Projected revenues and expenses have been completed, and work is now focused on the instructional staff step scale and employee compensation. Upon completion, we will go through a budget preparation process with a stated goal of having a draft budget available for review at the combined Personnel/Finance meeting scheduled for April 13, 2026.

PCCD Grant

HGMICS has submitted a \$70,000 grant to the Pa. Commission on Crime and Delinquency. This application is in the final stages of approval. As with prior grants, this opportunity is earmarked to address security and mental health in schools. The majority of the grant activities address gaps identified during the Pa State Police Risk Vulnerability Threat Assessment that was conducted in December of 2025.

Principal – TreeAnne McEnery

Instruction and Assessment

Teachers continue to analyze benchmark assessment data and are using the results to inform instructional planning, targeted interventions, and enrichment opportunities for students. This

data-driven approach supports differentiated instruction and ensures that students receive appropriate academic supports and extensions.

Trimester II will conclude on **March 9**, at which time teachers will finalize grades and prepare for **Spring Teacher Conferences**.

Important Dates

- End of Trimester II: **March 9**
- Report Cards Released: **March 17**
- Teacher Conferences: **March 20**

Curriculum and Program Development

Proposed Transition from AAE to Integrated STEAM Model

After reviewing the current **Advanced Academic Enrichment (AAE)** program, including eligibility criteria, enrollment stability, and alignment with our **Multiple Intelligences mission**, I am proposing a structural shift beginning in the **2026–2027 school year**.

Pennsylvania **Charter School Law** does not require charter schools to maintain a standalone gifted or advanced class. Advanced enrichment may legally be delivered through **differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, and targeted enrichment opportunities within the general education setting**. While a standalone AAE class is permissible, it is not mandated.

A review of the current model has identified several challenges, including fluctuating enrollment based on benchmark thresholds, limited alignment between qualifying subjects and enrichment instruction, and eligibility criteria that do not fully reflect the diverse intellectual strengths recognized within our **Multiple Intelligences framework**.

Proposed Program Shift (2026–2027)

I recommend discontinuing the standalone **AAE program** and implementing a **K–8 STEAM enrichment model embedded within the Specials rotation**.

This model would:

- Provide enrichment opportunities accessible to **all students**
- Allow for **small-group advanced extensions** within the STEAM framework
- Maintain **tiered differentiation within core instruction**
- Preserve **intervention supports for students who require additional academic support**
- Ensure compliance with **Chapter 16 requirements for identified gifted students** through documented specially designed instruction

This approach strengthens alignment with our **Multiple Intelligences philosophy**, expands access to enrichment experiences, and maintains compliance with state regulations while supporting instructional flexibility.

School Events

We continue to provide opportunities for **student engagement, creativity, and family involvement through school-wide events that celebrate the arts and community connection.**

- **Night of the Arts – March 5**
This annual event highlighted student work in the visual, performing, and applied arts and provided families the opportunity to experience the creativity and talent of our students across grade levels.
- **K–8 School Dance – March 21**
This upcoming event will provide students with a fun and inclusive social experience that supports school culture and community building.

Community Partnerships

Our school continues to build meaningful partnerships that connect students with community resources and experiential learning opportunities.

- **Community Garden Collaborative Event – April 18**
This partnership-based event will engage students in environmental stewardship, sustainability practices, and hands-on learning connected to science and community engagement.

Spring Enrichment and Activities

Our spring enrichment programming continues to provide students with opportunities to explore interests, build skills, and engage in extracurricular learning experiences.

- **Spring Enrichment & Tutoring Programs**
 - Total Programs: **16**
 - Student Participants: **159 (Grades K–8)**

These programs provide students with additional academic support, creative outlets, and opportunities to explore areas of interest beyond the regular school day.

- **Cross Country Program**
 - Student Participants: **63**

Our Cross Country program continues to promote **student wellness, perseverance, and teamwork**, providing students with opportunities to build physical fitness while representing the school community.

I appreciate the Board’s continued support as we move into a busy spring season of **instruction, assessment, student programming, and community engagement.**

Director of Student Services – Cathy Opshinsky

Aavidum Team Orientation

On Wednesday, March 4th, twelve middle school students proudly represented our school at a New Aavidum Team Orientation hosted by the Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit 19. Howard Gardner School and Abington Heights Middle School were officially welcomed into a growing regional network of students and educators committed to fostering cultures of care, connection, and belonging across Northeastern Pennsylvania. IU Program Specialist for Social and Emotional Wellness, Erin Pencek, led an interactive day focused on youth mental health and the foundations and four pillars of Aavidum. The experience provided students with opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas for school-wide initiatives.

The HGS team demonstrated strong student voice and leadership—actively participating in breakout sessions, collaborating enthusiastically with peers from Abington Heights, and embodying both STAR behavior and Aavidum values throughout the day. Middle School Counselor Zach Kenney and School Social Worker Megan Boettcher accompanied the group and returned energized and motivated to further expand Aavidum’s message within our school community. Currently operating as an after-school enrichment program, Aavidum also offers flexible opportunities for student engagement beyond regular meeting times, including participation in awareness campaigns and regional initiatives.

In addition, our students independently initiated a meaningful act of kindness while at the IU. Prior to the event, they decorated clothespins with handwritten positive messages and throughout the day, discreetly pinned them onto fellow participants, IU staff members, and visitors to the IU including superintendents from across IU19 and IU18 for their superintendents' meeting. As the notes were discovered, many individuals sought out our students to express their appreciation, sharing how the unexpected messages brightened their day. This spontaneous campaign beautifully reflected Aavidum’s mission in action and showcased the compassion and leadership of our Howard Gardner students.

Aavidum, founded by students at a Pennsylvania high school, has grown into a nationwide student-led movement with hundreds of school-based clubs. The name, derived from Latin roots and coined by its founding students, means “I’ve got your back.” At its core, Aavidum builds supportive school communities by raising awareness of mental health and reducing stigma. Its mission promotes open communication and peer support while upholding acceptance of all students, acknowledgement of individual needs, appreciation of challenges, and care demonstrated through meaningful action.

Director of Operations – Patty Mickavicz

Food Service

Per federal regulations, all schools participating in USDA School Nutrition Programs must receive two food safety/health inspections each year. HGIMCS completed both required inspections for the current school year on October 22, 2025, and February 19, 2026, meeting the compliance requirement.

PIMS

State reporting collections remain on schedule. The 2024–2025 ESSER Collection was submitted on March 2, 2026, and ACS is scheduled to be signed and approved by the CEO by April 3, 2026. The upcoming C6 Safe Schools – Bus Collection is the next required submission and is expected to be completed by April 10, 2026.

March 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	4.60%
Carbondale*	1	0	1	0.26%
Dunmore*	6	4	10	2.56%
Lackawanna Trail	1	0	1	0.26%
Lakeland	1	0	1	0.26%
Mid Valley*	6	0	6	1.53%
North Pocono*	3	1	4	1.02%
Old Forge*	2	1	3	0.77%
Pittston Area	2	1	3	0.77%
Riverside	4	1	5	1.28%
Scranton*	258	74	332	84.91%
Tunkhannock	1	0	1	0.26%
Valley View	4	0	4	1.02%
Wyoming Area	1	0	1	0.26%
<u>Wyoming Valley West*</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0.26%</u>
Total	303	88	391	100%

**Redirection*

2026-2027 Public Lottery Summary

By the Application for Admission deadline of March 6, 2025, the school received 274 completed applications. Of these, 9 applicants were from Abington Heights School District, 221 from Scranton, and 44 from other districts.

Applications by grade level included:

- 109 - Kindergarten
- 19 - 1st Grade
- 21 - 2nd Grade
- 23 - 3rd Grade
- 27 - 4th Grade
- 36 - 5th Grade
- 17 - 6th Grade
- 19 - 7th Grade
- 3 - 8th Grade

After reviewing enrollment capacity, the school identified 45 available seats in kindergarten and 3 seats in 7th Grade.

Among the 274 applicants, 36 were siblings of current students, 4 were children of employees, and 2 were founding families, all of whom received preference in accordance with the Enrollment Policy.

After applying these preferences and filling available seats, 16 kindergarten seats remained available for new incoming students through the lottery. The remaining applicants were placed on the waiting list during the School's Public Lottery.

New Business:

There was no New Business at this time.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:09 a.m.

Next Meeting Date: April 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.