

HGMICS BOT SEPTEMBER 15, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

HOWARD GARDNER MI CHARTER SCHOOL (HGMICS)

Board of Trustees Public Meeting

1615 East Elm Street, Scranton, PA 18505

Tuesday September 15, 2026

5:30 pm

AGENDA

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance led by School Board President, Sam Ceccacci

Board Members

Sam Ceccacci, President

Mary Beth D'Andrea

Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, Vice President

Al Dorunda

Dino Galli, Secretary

Wayne Evans

Michael Barbetti, Treasurer

Dr. Fran Langan

Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe

Judy Price

Laurie Cadden

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.

-
- | | | |
|-------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| I. | Approval of August 18, 2026 Minutes (Attachment B.) | Sam Ceccacci |
| II. | President's Report | Sam Ceccacci |
| III. | Finance/Facilities Committee | Mike Barbetti |
| | 1. August 2026 Financial Reports (Attachment C) | |
| | 2. Investment Committee Recommendation | |
| | 3. Policy Review Summary Chart (Attachment D) | |
| IV. | Personnel Committee | Dino Galli |
| | 1. September 2026 Personnel Activity Report (Attachment E) | |
| V. | Academic Committee | Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen |
| | 1. Schoolwide Title I Parent Engagement Policy (Attachment F) | |
| VI. | Nominating Committee | Laurie Cadden |
| VII. | School Matters | Joe Ross |
-

1. Administrative Updates (Attachment G)
VIII. New Business
Adjournment

Sam Ceccacci

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM. President Sam Ceccacci led the Board in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Participation:

Sam Ceccacci asked if anyone wanted to address the Board. There were no comments.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: *Approve minutes from the August 18, 2026 HGMICS Board Meeting*

The motion was made by Catherine Richmond-Cullen and seconded by Dino Galli.

All Trustees voted yes with 10 Trustees present, and one excused.

President's Report:

SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

The 2026-2027 Academic Year began on August 25, 2026 with 404 students enrolled from 15 area school districts. A total of 299 students receive busing services from their respective school districts on a daily basis.

The Personnel, Academic, Development/Finance and Nominating Committees have convened since the last Board of Directors Meeting. Of primary importance was the completed development and timely submission of the Charter Renewal to the relevant school districts. Administration will keep us informed in a timely manner as the approval process progresses throughout the year until final approval is received.

Other topics for committee discussion were personnel activity, staff recognition related to the school's 15 Year Celebration, the CEO Annual Evaluation, the updated Teacher Supervision and Evaluation Plan Manual, the school-wide Title I Parent Engagement Policy and the Cyclical Monitoring Process. School finances and the status of the annual audit process as well as future board composition were also matters for committee discussion.

Academic Intervention Services have begun as well as Parent Forums. Student Ambassadors conducted a remembrance in honor of the 25th anniversary of September 11th and student school pictures have been completed. Student academic benchmark assessments have begun and will continue to be administered in the near future.

Finally, the annual HGMICS golf tournament is scheduled for October 11, 2026 at Pine Hills. We continue to look for sponsorships and basket donations.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Ceccacci
Board Chairman

Finance-Facilities-Audit Committee

August 31, 2026 Financial Report

John Marsico, Business Manager, presented an overview of the August 2026 financial report. There were no comments or discussions.

Motion: *Approve the Financial Report through August 31, 2026.*

The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Suzanne Amrogio-Jaffe. All Trustees voted yes with 10 Trustees Present, and 1 excused.

Investment Committee

Mike Barbetti, committee chair, reported that the investment committee, an ad hoc committee of the Board, met on 9/4/26 to review qualifications of the financial institutions that responded to our RFQ. After deliberation, a decision was made to recommend the school invest not more than \$1,000,000 split equally among Peoples Security Bank, Fidelity Bank, and Nottingham Trust (Community Bank).

Motion: To approve the Investment Committee's authorization for HGMICS to invest up to \$1,000,000, divided equally among Peoples Security Bank, Fidelity Bank, and Nottingham Trust (Community Bank), subject to the terms and conditions approved by the Investment Committee.

The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe. Nine Trustees voted yes, One Trustee was excused, and One Trustee (Mary Beth D'Andrea) abstained.

Policy Review Summary

Robert Gentilezza reviewed the policies in front of the Board for approval. There were six policies that were revised, one policy was reviewed and there was one new policy. After discussion, Mike Barbetti asked for a motion.

Motion: Approve the Policy Review Summary, as reported and submitted.

The motion was made by Al Dorunda and seconded by Fran Langan.
All Trustees voted yes with ten present, and one excused.

Personnel Committee

Dino Galli reported the personnel committee met on 9/1/26 to review the Personnel activity report.

August 2026 Personnel Activity Report

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

The motion was made by Mary Beth D'Andrea and seconded by Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe.
All trustees voted yes with ten trustees present and one excused.

Academic Committee

Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen reported the committee met on 9/1/26. The abrupt resignation of the math teacher and the interviews scheduled with possible candidates were discussed.

The Teacher Supervision and Evaluation Plan Manual was discussed. This review was informational and does not require formal adoption by the full Board. The updated manual is fully aligned with PDE and uses all acceptable standards and procedures. Tree Anne McEnery, principal, elaborated on the details of the plan.

The cyclical monitoring process for review of special education compliance has started. Cathy Opshinsky, Director of Student Services, reviewed the plan. The self-assessment component has begun, and the monitor will be on site the week of November 16 for meetings.

All Title programs were reviewed and discussed by the committee. The Title I Parent Engagement policy was discussed in detail.

Schoolwide Title I Parent Engagement Policy

Motion: Approve the Schoolwide Title I Parent Engagement Policy as submitted.

The motion was made by Fran Langan and seconded by Mary Beth D'Andrea.

All trustees voted yes with ten present, and one excused.

Nominating Committee

Laurie Cadden indicated the committee met on 9/9/26. Discussion was conducted on board composition and the slate of officers for next year. Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen will ascend to Board President. Sam Ceccacci will remain on the board as a trustee. Potential candidates were discussed to complete the slate of officers. More discussions will be conducted as the year continues.

School Matters

Joe Ross provided an update on the start of school which began successfully on August 25th. Other topics covered were the 9/11 event, the inaugural 15 year celebration newsletter, the comprehensive planning steering committee, the audit, and the roof replacement project status update.

Administrative Updates

September 15, 2026

CEO- Joe Ross

2026-2027 School Year

The school year has begun! We opened our doors on August 25th to start our 15th year of existence as a regional charter school. We have full enrollment at grade levels kindergarten through 6th and have an enrollment of 404 students. New staff and students have acclimated to the school well, and we held our PBIS kickoff event on 9/3/26. Back to school night was an excellent way to welcome new students and families and welcome back our returning students and families.

Charter Renewal Submission

On August 31, 2026, we submitted our charter renewal application to Scranton and Abington Heights School Districts respectively. This submission was the product of a combined effort of the leadership team of the school. Despite navigating a difficult timeline, the submission was completed and sent electronically and via certified mail. The submission consisted of a twenty-nine-page narrative with close to 2,600 pages of supporting documentation. Superintendents from both districts acknowledged receipt electronically via return of the read receipt.

Unfortunately, now we wait. Remarkably, there is no time requirement for a response by either district. The renewal submission is evidence of the high-level of education provided by our school.

15 Year Celebration- Growing Every Mind

This year we will be taking time each month to celebrate our successes both currently and historically. This will be accomplished and shared with the school community via the newsletter that is on the Board drive.

Each month, we will highlight one of the multiple intelligences. The focus for this month is INTRAPERSONAL- *Know Yourself*. This intelligence was highlighted during the PBIS kickoff event of “Be the I in kind”.

The student ambassadors conducted a remembrance event in honor of the 25th anniversary of September 11th. The script, uploaded on the Board drive, had a theme of “Remember, Honor, Serve, Unite. In keeping with the theme of “15 Years of Growing Every Mind”, the script incorporated the multiple intelligences into the program.

Additionally, as part of the 15 years of growing every mind, the CEO will release the first of what will be monthly newsletter updates. This month features the employees who have been employed by the school all 15 years of the charter; special recognition to Renee Dougherty, Sara Carroll, Suppi Chadragiri, Jeri McNulty, Patty Mickavicz, Maria Summa, and Steve Kurilla. Finally, Steve Kurilla and our performance band is the feature of Multiple Intelligence in Action. The band program received a grant from the Peter Marsh Foundation to defray the costs of performing at nursing homes and veterans’ centers in the area.

Audit

The financial audit is underway, and we are on schedule to have a draft available for BOT review at the October BOT meeting. Kudos to John Marsico and Trish Williams for the year-long work that is resulting in an extremely smooth audit process. As part of this years school code, Charter Schools are required to perform additional steps as part of the annual audit. We have settled on the agreed upon principles with Brian Kelly CPA firm. This process is also on track for October completion.

Golf Tournament

The annual golf tournament is set for October 11, 2026 at Pine Hills. As of 9/10/26 we have 14 groups already registered. Sponsorships are rolling in. McKenna Snyder LLC has signed on as an event sponsor and has donated \$3,000 to the school. We have presenting sponsors at the \$1,500 level of Bulldog Maintenance, Interim Services, Battaglia’s Sporting Goods, and we continue to offer sponsorship opportunities. 50/50 tickets will be distributed this week, and basket donations are being accepted.

Principal Report; TreeAnne McEnery

HGMICS experienced a successful opening and first week of school. Schoolwide routines and expectations were established across Grades K–8, and students in Grades 3–8 began core

academic instruction by the end of the week. Over the next month, we look forward to strengthening instruction through schoolwide benchmarking, targeted academic supports, and professional learning opportunities for staff. We will also continue building connections with students and families through the Parent Forum, NED’s Mindset Mission, and the return of the Lackawanna County Library Bookmobile.

Assessment and Academic Programming

- LinkIt! benchmark assessments were administered in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science for Grades 3–8.
- HGMICS is using LinkIt! benchmarks in place of the Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDTs). LinkIt! provides detailed data aligned with PSSA content and question formats, allowing teachers to identify specific areas of strength and need and plan instruction based directly on grade-level content.
- Schoolwide Amplify Reading and Mathematics benchmark assessments will begin during the week of September 28.
- Tier 3 academic intervention services began during the week of August 24.
 - o Initial Tier 3 services were determined using kindergarten screening results and end-of-year benchmark data from the 2025–2026 school year.

Teacher Evaluation and Supervision

- The updated Teacher Evaluation and Supervision Manual was presented to instructional staff and the Board Academic Committee.
 - o There are no structural changes to the school’s established supervision and evaluation processes.
 - o The manual was updated to incorporate applicable Act 13 requirements and clarify current evaluation expectations and procedures.

Title I Parent and Family Engagement

- The annual Schoolwide Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy was reviewed by the Board Academic Committee.
- The Parent Forum will begin its annual meeting schedule with an in-person meeting on September 10.
 - o During the meeting, the Parent and Family Engagement Policy will be presented for review and family input.
 - o Families will also receive information about the school's Student Assistance Program (SAP) and the supports available to students and families.

Student and Family Programming

- NED's Mindset Mission performance is scheduled for September 14 for students in Grades K–6. The program supports positive behavior, perseverance, personal responsibility, and a growth mindset.
- The Lackawanna County Library Bookmobile will begin its monthly visits to the school on September 25, providing students with regular access to library resources.

Professional Development and Teacher Induction

- All first- and second-year teachers have been registered for the Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit's Teacher Induction Program.
 - o Initial in-person induction training sessions are scheduled during the weeks of September 14 and September 22.
- Members of the mathematics department, grades 3-8, are registered for the following NEIU professional-development opportunities:
 - o Using Assessments to Support Mathematics Instruction
 - o How Did You Get That? Seven Strategies for Improving Open Responses in Math
 - o These professional-development opportunities support the school's continued focus on data-informed mathematics instruction and improving students'

mathematical reasoning and written responses.

I appreciate the Board's continued support as we advance into the school year.

Student Support Services Update – Cathy Opshinsky

Aevidum Student Leadership and Regional Engagement

Four HGS Aevidum student leaders, accompanied by Aevidum Advisors Mrs. Megan Boettcher, School Social Worker, and Mr. Zachary Kenney, Middle School Counselor, participated in the regional Aevidum Student Day: Different Schools. One Message. You Matter. event on August 31st. Hosted by NEIU19, the Lackawanna/Susquehanna County Behavioral Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention (BH/ID/EI) Program, and WBRE/WYOU Eyewitness News, the event brought together Aevidum student leaders from Blue Ridge, Carbondale Area, Mid-Valley, North Pocono, and Howard Gardner.

Despite being the youngest participants, HGS students represented the school with confidence and distinction while engaging alongside high school student leaders from across the region. The day included student-led discussions, a connection circle, an idea exchange, and a panel focused on "What Students Want Adults to Know." Participants also collaborated on a regional Aevidum challenge centered on the message, "What if we all..."

As part of the event, students contributed to the creation of a public service announcement that will air on WBRE/WYOU in recognition of September as National Suicide Prevention Month. This experience provided HGS Aevidum student leaders with an important opportunity to amplify youth voices, strengthen regional connections, and advance the Aevidum message that every person matters.

Director of Operations- Patty Mickavicz

Family Wellness

As part of our Back-to-School Night that took place in August, the Wellness Committee incorporated a Family Wellness component designed to connect families with valuable community resources and services.

We were pleased to welcome a variety of community partners and local organizations, including:

- Lackawanna State Park Complex – PA Department of Conservation and Natural

Resources

- Lackawanna College Rocket Project
- NET Bank

- Scouts of America
- Scranton Counseling Center
- Scranton Fire Department – Engine #10
- Scranton Public Library
- ShopRite Pharmacy

Having these community partners present provided our families with an opportunity to connect with valuable resources, learn more about services available to them, and strengthen their connection to the community that supports our school.

Student Photos

Zak Zavada Photography was on campus September 10–12 for student school pictures.

Student photos will be available to order through Mr. Zavada by September 19. The school will also use the digital photos to update PowerSchool for student identification purposes.

School District-Provided Transportation

Currently, 299 HGMICS students utilize school district-provided transportation. This transportation includes 5 Scranton School District buses, 1 Abington Heights School District bus, and 12 district-provided contractor vehicles.

PIMS & PVAAS Update

On September 14, 2026, HGMICS will submit Staff, Student, School Enrollment, and Teacher-Student Linkage information through PIMS. This information will then be used by SAS EVAAS, the vendor for Pennsylvania's PVAAS system, to update staff access and accounts, the student population available in PVAAS, and teacher-student assignments used for staff reporting and data review.

Upcoming October 1 PIMS Snapshot (C1 Collection):

The October 1 Snapshot, due October 9, 2026, is one of the most critical PIMS submissions of the school year. Accurate data submission is essential, as this snapshot establishes the baseline for the school year.

September Enrollment by District

School District	Regular		SPED	Enrollment	SD %
Abington Heights	12		4	16	3.97%
Carbondale Area*	1		0	1	0.25%
Dunmore*	5		3	8	1.99%
Lackawanna Trail	1		0	1	0.25%
Lakeland	1		0	1	0.25%
Mid Valley*	4		1	5	1.24%
North Pocono*	3		1	4	0.99%
Old Forge*	1		1	2	0.50%
Pittston Area	1	1	2		0.50%
Riverside	5	1	6		1.49%
Scranton*	269	81	350		86.85%
Tunkhannock	1	0	1		0.25%
Valley View	3	0	3		0.74%
Wyoming Area	2	0	2		0.50%
Wyoming VW	1	0	1		0.25%
Total	310	93	403		100%

*Redirection