HYBRID REORGANIZATION/WORKSHOP MINUTES
HIGHLAND PARK BOARD OF EDUCATION
HIGHLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

January 5, 2026

7:00 p.m. via Zoom - https://zoom.us/j/94217817160 and in-person at the Middle School

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order

2. Announcement of Notice

Ms. Denise DeRosa, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. She gave the following notice: The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of the public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon. In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the Highland Park Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting setting forth the time, date, and location to be submitted for publication to the Home News Tribune and Courier News and posted on the Board's website at least 48 hours in advance of this meeting. Members of the public who wish to address the Board will be given the opportunity to do so before the Board adjourns for the evening.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Final Election Results for School Board Members:

Candidate Name	**Official Total**
Daniel Battey	3,161
Francisco Maldonado	3,314
Ann Vardeman	3,170

5. Swearing In of Elected Board Members

Ms. DeRosa swore in the elected Board Members, Daniel Battey, Francisco Maldonado and Ann Vardeman.

6. Roll Call

Members Present: Dr. Dan Battey; Ms. Allison Casal-Dunn; Dr. Monique Coleman; Mr. Francisco Maldonado; Ms. Marilyn Pruce; Dr. Ethan Schoolman; Ms. Nicole Stanio and Ms. Ann Vardeman.

Absent: Dr. Sara Pixley

Also Present: Dr. Kristina Susca, Superintendent.
Mrs. Denise M. DeRosa, Business Administrator/Board Secretary

7. Discussion and Signing of the Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest

Ms. DeRosa reviewed the Code of Ethics and Conflict of interest agreement. She reminded the board members that they have been provided with this information in their previous years as board members. She asked them to read the information again, and sign the acknowledgement form, and if they had any questions to please reach out to her.

8. Nomination and Election of President

Ms. DeRosa called for nominations for the position of President of the Board of Education.

Ms.Casal-Dunn nominated Ms.Vardeman and Ms. Stanio seconded the nomination. As there were no other nominations, Ms. DeRosa conducted a roll call vote for the position of President, and Ms. Ann Vardeman was elected President.

Vote: 8-0-1
Yes: Battey; Casal-Dunn; Coleman; Maldonado; Pruce; Schoolman; Stanio and Varderman
Absent: Sara Pixley

Ms. Vardeman then took the chair as President of the Board of Education, and thanked the Board Members for their support.

9. Board Secretary Turns Meeting over to New President

10. Nomination and Election of Vice-President

Ms. Vardeman called for nominations for the position of Vice President of the Board of Education.

Dr. Coleman nominated Ms. Pruce and Dr. Battey seconded the nomination. As there were no other nominations, Ms. DeRosa conducted a roll call vote for the position of Vice President, and Ms. Marilyn Pruce was elected Vice President.

Vote: 8-0-1
Yes: Battey; Casal-Dunn; Coleman; Maldonado; Pruce; Schoolman; Stanio and Varderman
Absent: Sara Pixley

Ms. Pruce then took the chair as Vice President of the Board of Education, and thanked the Board Members for their support.

11. Approval of Annual Board Meeting Calendar

I move that the Board of Education accept the recommendation of the superintendent to approve the Annual Board Meeting Calendar for the 2026 Board year, as per the attached.

Moved: Ann Vardeman Seconded: Francisco Maldonado Vote: 8-0-1
Absent: Sara Pixley

12. Delegate and Alternate to N.J. School Boards Association

I move that the Board of Education elect **Ann Vardeman** as Delegate, and **Marilyn Pruce** as Alternate Delegate, to the New Jersey School Boards Association for the 2026 Board year.
Moved: Ann Vardeman Seconded: Nicole Stanio Vote: 8-0-1

Absent: Sara Pixley

13. Delegate and Alternate to Middlesex County School Boards Association

I move that the Board of Education elect **Marilyn Pruce** as Delegate and **Ann Vardeman** as Alternate Delegate, to the Middlesex County School Boards Association for the 2026 Board year.

Moved: Ann Vardeman Seconded: Dan Battey Vote: 8-0-1
Absent: Sara Pixley

14. Resolutions

I move that the Board of Education approve the following resolutions:

A. Be it Resolved that the rules, regulations and policies of the Highland Park Board of Education, adopted for the previous year, shall be adopted for the current year.

B. Be it Resolved that Robert's Rules of Order be adopted as the official parliamentary procedure manual to be used to conduct meetings.

C. Be it Resolved that the official newspapers of the Board of Education be the **Home News Tribune** of Neptune, NJ, and/or **The Courier News** of Somerville, NJ, for the advertisement of meetings and legal ads and all other necessary public notifications. All official notices shall also be placed on the district's website: www.hpschools.net.

D. Be it Resolved that the following be designated as depository of school monies:

TD Bank
NJ Asset & Rebate Management Program

E. Be it Resolved that the General Operating Account and the Payroll Agency Account shall bear the signatures of the Treasurer of School Monies and Board Secretary, together with that of the President of the Board of Education, and that the Net Payroll Account shall contain only the signature of the Treasurer of School Monies.

F. Be it Resolved that the following checking accounts shall bear the signatures as listed below:

School	Account Name	Signatories	# of Signers Per Account
Irving	Student Fund	Principal and Business Administrator and Assistant Administrative Secretary for Student Funds	2 of 3
Bartle	Student Fund	Principal and Business Administrator and Assistant Administrative Secretary for Student Funds	2 of 3
Middle School	Student Fund	Principal and Assistant Principal and Business Administrator and Assistant Administrative Secretary for Student Funds	2 of 4

High School	Student Fund	Principal and Assistant Principal and Business Administrator and Assistant Administrative Secretary for Student Funds	2 of 4
Business Office	Food Service Fund	Board President and Treasurer and Business Administrator	2 of 3
Business Office	SUI Trust Account	Board President and Treasurer and Business Administrator	3 of 3
High School	Athletic Activities Account	Athletic Programs & Sports Medicine Administrator and Business Administrator and Superintendent	2 of 3

G. Be it Resolved that the Board of Education authorizes Denise DeRosa, the district purchasing agent, to make purchases of goods and services entered into on behalf of the State by the Division of Purchase and Property utilizing various vendors that have State Contracts pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-10(a).

H. Be it Resolved that the Board of Education acknowledges that Denise DeRosa, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, is a Qualified Purchasing Agent. Therefore, the current bid threshold is set at $53,000 and the current quote threshold is set at $7,950, subject to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-3 (a) and Subsection b of Section 9 of P.L. 1971, c. 198 (C.40A:11-9). Be it further resolved that the Board Secretary is authorized to sign Board contracts throughout the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school year for goods and services required for the operation of the school system.

I. Be it Resolved that the Board of Education authorizes the School Business Administrator to pay obligations throughout the year with review by the Board of Education at the next Regular Public Meeting in the event that the payment of such bills is required for the district to meet its essential financial obligations.

J. Be it Resolved that the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to hire new staff in the absence of the Board with formal approval being taken by the Board of Education at the next Regular Public Meeting.

K. Be it Resolved that the Board of Education authorizes the use of the Uniform Minimum Chart of Accounts.

Moved: Ann Vardeman Seconded: Dan Battey Vote: 8-0-1
Absent: Sara Pixley

15. Board Appointments:

I move that the Board of Education accept the recommendation of the Superintendent to revise the following appointments for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year:

a. Be it Resolved that **Kevin Robinson, Interim** Supervisor of Educational Services, be appointed as the District's Homeless Liaison.

b. Be it Resolved that **Amy Coppola,** Acting Executive Director of Student Services, be appointed as the District's ADA Officer.

c. Be it Resolved that **Amy Coppola**, Acting Executive Director of Student Services, be appointed as the English as a Second Language Program Officer.

Moved: Ann Vardeman Seconded: Nicole Stanio Vote: 8-0-1
Absent: Sara Pixley

16. President's Report

A. Appointments for 2026 Board Year:

1. Committee on Curriculum and Instruction: **Dr. Dan Battey Chair**, **Dr. Sara Pixley**, **Dr. Ethan Schoolman**
2. Committee on Finance and Facilities: **Allison Casal-Dunn Chair**, **Francisco Maldonado**, **Marilyn Pruce**
3. Committee on Equity & Excellence: **Dr. Monique Coleman**, **Ann Vardeman**, **Nicole Longoria-Stanio**
4. Liaison to Municipal Drug & Alcohol Alliance: **Elizabeth Asamoah**
5. Liaison to Borough Public Information Committee: **Dr. Sara Pixley**
6. Liaison to the Highland Park Educational Foundation: **Francisco Maldonado**
7. Liaison to the Commission for Universal Access: **Dr. Dan Battey**
8. Representative to the Public Library: **Michele Rodrigues**
9. Liaison to Special Education Parent Advisory Committee: **Allison Casal-Dunn**
10. Liaison to Human Relations: **Nicole Longoria-Stanio**
11. Liaison to the Board of Health: **Dr. Monique Coleman**, **Marilyn Pruce**
12. Liaison to HP Athletic Boosters: **Ann Vardeman**
13. Liaison to the Green Team: **Ethan Schoolman**

17. Old Business

Dr. Coleman congratulated and thanked Ann and Marilyn for stepping up to fulfill the President and Vice President positions on the board. She knows it is very time consuming and appreciates their efforts. Other board members did the same.

18. New Business

Ann Vardeman welcomed Francisco Maldonado to the Board.

19. Public Comment

The Highland Park Board of Education welcomes public participation and has reserved this time for your comments. (Board Policies #0164 and #0167 establish and regulate the right of the public to participate in public meetings.)

Kristen Springer, Denison Street - Requested information from the board and Dr. Susca about the Comengo evaluation for the special education department programs, and specifically when they would be reaching out to parents to set up forums and reviews of findings and colaboration.

20. Adjournment

The Board of Education adjourned the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Moved: Ann Vardeman Seconded: Marilyn Pruce Vote: Vote: 8-0-1
Absent: Sara Pixley

Respectfully submitted,

Denise M. DeRosa
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Acknowledged by:

_____
Board President

2025-2026 Highland Park Board of Education Goals

Accountability for Student Achievement

The Highland Park Board of Education will support the Pathways to Excellence 2025-2026 Strategic Plan by working in collaboration with district leadership to systematically review and enhance the district's action plans developed to support our strategic goals, ensuring alignment with our district's vision, mission, and objectives.

The Board will:

- Review policies or new recommended policies (e.g. attendance, academic integrity, use of A.I.), and make necessary revisions based on current research, data, and recommendations to promote positive academic, social and emotional outcomes.

- Approve curricula updates and/or professional development plans that:

  - ☐ Provide essential learning tools, technology and rigorous curricula.
  - ☐ Expand equitable access to challenging coursework.
  - ☐ Create inclusive, culturally responsive, identity-affirming environments, and include evidence-based and measurable strategies to reduce racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities.

- Analyze district academic, attendance, and climate data several times per year to evaluate current strategies.

- Meet with the mayor’s office several times during the 2025-2026 school year to exchange information on district facility needs, documenting outcomes and action items.

Communication of Vision & Goals

The Highland Park Board of Education will strengthen communication efforts to ensure the vision, mission, and goals are clearly articulated to all district stakeholders and progress updates are communicated.

The Board will:

- ☐ Publish a monthly public update through the district website, email list, and social media summarizing key board actions and upcoming opportunities for community input.
- ☐ Highlight staff and student achievements in several public communications (newsletter, social media, or board meeting recognitions) during the school year.
- ☐ Share updates on district challenges and progress at every regular board meeting.
- ☐ Increase family participation in surveys, focus groups, and advisory groups with targeted outreach to historically underrepresented groups.