

**Highland School District #203**  
**Board Work Study Session**  
**HJH Room 155**  
**October 4, 2021, 7:00 a.m.**

The October 4, 2021 Board Work Study Session convened at 7:05 am. Present were Board Chair Nikki Keller, Members David Barnes, Carlos López, and Cindy Reed; Superintendent Mark Anderson, Director of Business and Operations Francis Badu, and Recording Secretary Julie Notman. Board Member Lupita Flores was absent.

Director of Technology Brian Johnson joined the meeting at 7:05 a.m.

**1. Communication Check-In:** Brian showed the district website on the wall screen and shared the edits and updates he had made from the list the board created at the September Work Study. HHS no longer issues a daily bulletin but uses Scottie Hype instead and there is a link to it on the HHS page and also to the district's YouTube channels. Need to change the stock picture of students on the home pages to ones of our students and adjust pictures so they don't look stretched. There is a request for para-eds (that wish to) to have staff pages for parents to see.

Brian left the meeting at 7:23 a.m.

**2. Leave of Absence Request:** Mark shared a Leave of Absence request from Silvia Gutierrez starting Oct. 18 through the end of the school year. The board accepted it and will approve it at the regular board meeting. That position will need to be posted soon. He noted that we have hired an RN, a Highland graduate, Scott Podruzny. We anticipate having 28-30 approved COVID-19 vaccine accommodations staff that will be required to test weekly. Testing will be done at MWC, TIS and the district office.

Mindy joined the meeting at 7:31 a.m.

**3. Intersession Update:** Mindy reported that she has met with three of the four buildings and each building's week will be a bit different. HHS will have two course/class times with passing time in between. Students can choose any two courses but will be encouraged to have at least one class be in a subject in which they are deficient or failing. Classes offered include options for ELA, Science, Social Studies, Math, Credit Retrieval, and electives, presented in a non-high-school-standard way with topic titles such as Real World Statistics, Apple Industry, Adobe Affects. They are targeting 160 students. HJH will be cohorted with many options including those that the students requested. They are hoping to serve 144 students. TIS and MWC will be similar to each other and we should be able to serve nearly every student between the first two sessions. MWC will offer three classes and TIS four. The theme for the year is "Life" and the first session is more focused on self and health while the second session will have greater focus on career topics with plans to bring in speakers to share about different careers, all age appropriate. The staff are excited and passionate about what they'll get to teach. Start times will be staggered like the regular school day with a half day schedule. We have enough bus drivers signed up and are looking for snack donations from area businesses. Roughly 16+ districts have received Balanced Calendar grant monies but Highland and Toppenish are the only two that have implemented changes starting this school year. Other districts are interested in how we got the change going. We will have an HSD representative present at a future Balanced Calendar Summit event.

Mindy left the meeting at 7:56 a.m.

Director of Student Services Kirsten Lenz joined the meeting at 7:57 a.m.

**5. Student Services Year-Start Update:** Kirsten said the challenges so far this year are the increase of referrals since last spring and at the beginning of this school year and that 60% of the Special Ed staff is new to the district. They are good hires but it is a challenge. We still have three para-ed positions open. Goals include creating written policy and procedures so SSO staff can refer to them, and training ‘backups’ for key players to cover for them when absent. Kirsten feels we’ve done a good job so far with being in compliance and they are looking at how they can become more efficient at each step of the special ed process. There will be two state assessments this year, one this fall, considered a ‘make-up’ assessment, to replace last spring’s so 4-12 students will test on last year’s grade skills but not the performance part. Next spring will be the regular assessment. All this testing takes away from teaching. The contracted school psychologist will be on-site one week per month and work remotely the other three. We also have contracted a Speech Language Pathologist who will work remotely to assist Eva. The case load is more than one SLP can effectively serve.

Kirsten left the meeting at 8:12 a.m.

**4. Policy 6000 Program Planning, Budget Preparation, Adoption & Implementation:** Francis reminded the Board that increasing the minimum GF balance percent was discussed previously and Policy 6000 now includes that minimum. The Board is in agreement and will vote on it at the regular meeting.

**6. Facilities Committee Report:** Cindy said the committee consists of HSD staff members Brian, Scott, Don, Josh, Francis, Mark and herself and community members Cameron Howell, Lori Mayfield, Adriana & Sergio Parra and Francisco Ayala. She shared the results of the survey of what needs to be done to improve, update, and/or maintain district facilities. They’ve had a first meeting with ESD 112 to brainstorm how to prioritize need and how to best present to the public. The ESD 112 representative shared with the committee how to maximize getting matching funds and emphasized having a one, two, and three plan, for instance, first year replace/update HVAC, 2<sup>nd</sup> year -?- and 3<sup>rd</sup> year the 3<sup>rd</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> switch. Still looking at having two levies (operations and capital projects) in back-to-back years or concurrently.

**7. District Vision and Mission Statement:** The district’s statement needs to include certain language (equity or equitable) and all staff in the district including the Board are required to have equity training plus teachers must also have SEL training. Michelle Curry has been tasked with providing or finding training.

**8. HHS ASB Presentation:** Mark said he plans to invite the ASB Leadership to have a representative(s) at the Work Study each month to observe and be available for questions. He has met with them regarding how the Homecoming and changes to their constitution were shared and how that might be improved. The Board is concerned about ASB and how concessions are managed.

HHS ASB Leadership: Gwen Rydberg, Jazmine Sargent, Ellie Pierce and Marcial Romero Gomez and HHS ASB Leadership Advisor Stephani Kinney joined the meeting at 8:48 a.m.

HHS ASB President Gwen Rydberg said an ASB constitution should be updated every 5-7 years and theirs hasn’t been updated since 2017 so they updated some typos and language, lowered the GPA to run for office to include students with good leadership skills who have lower grades, and removed homecoming language, explaining that Homecoming is a tradition and not an ASB policy or procedure. They advertised the proposed changes via student school email, made an announcement at an assembly and offered a lunchtime meeting for anyone with questions. Changes to Homecoming were a result of what they’ve learned at ASB conferences, where ASB leaders come together to share ideas, and an on-site training with Scott Bachovich, a youth motivational speaker. They have learned about equity and ask vs give, volume vs trust, and are

trying to get more students to feel included and to participate. A concern of the Board is what might happen with changing tradition, how the community might feel about it and the affect it could have on voter support for the levy. It was pointed out that Homecoming is supposed to be when alumni ‘come home’ to their school. The Leadership explained that they changed only the titles to Homecoming Court (all candidates) and Royalty (instead of Queen and King, top two votes) and decided to not have a dress up week during Homecoming week due to lack of participation in the past but instead align or anchor dress up/theme days to a meaning/purpose. They had a patriotic day for 9/11 in September and are having ‘Pink Out’ days in October for Breast Cancer Awareness month. They are trying to find a balance [in how they do activities] between students that could have a good experience and those that might have a negative experience.

Gwen, Jazmine, Ellie and Marcial left the meeting at 9:29 a.m.

ASB Advisor Stephani Kinney explained that Scott Bachovich is an SEL (Social Emotional Learning) advisor from California and GEAR Up paid for the training with him. They are also reading the Houston Kraft book [Deep Kindness]. She emphasized that the decisions that were made were anchored in SEL. At Highland there is a lack of support by staff, who decline to participate in lunchtime activities and that demographics of the community have changed to 70% low-income Hispanics. She wants the students to have empathy for all students, that they are not trying to take away but to encourage more participation and are trying to balance tradition [with current trends]. The Board is concerned that traditions will be lost or changed and that will negatively affect students that like those traditions and look forward to them as well as possible loss of community support. They would like communication to be improved so mix-ups are avoided.

Stephani left the meeting at 9:50 a.m.

**9. Brandon Jensen-ASB Update:** Brandon was ill and could not be present. He will be invited to the November Work Study.

Mark shared that the next PSE Negotiations meeting will be 10/13. Nikki confirmed the Oct. 19 Regular Board meeting date, she will be absent, David will preside.

Meeting over at 10:24 a.m.

---

Chair

---

Secretary