

2025-26 Horace Mann PTA Meeting Agenda
 November 13, 2025 (In Person - HMS Library)
 6:00-7:00pm

Agenda Item:	Who:	Time:
Welcome and Introductions Review last meeting's minutes: September 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> September minutes approved by the group. Upcoming meetings: (All meetings in HMS Library) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wednesday, February 11th Wednesday, May 6th 	Katie (PTA president) and Alex (PTA vice president)	5 min
Principal's Forum Test scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading and math: Last year, HMS had 70% students proficient in reading and math. This is highest or second highest in the district and in the top half for the state. We are still hoping that with phonics instruction we can get into the mid or upper 80s. Math: 90% of kids were at or above grade level for math. We want to maintain that. Science: they redid the test this year, so scores dropped but it's a different metric, so not comparable. We were second highest in the city. Goals for the year: a frustration is that the state measures are so delayed that it's really hard to use the information for any instructional change. I wrote our goals this year to fit with the measures we're doing throughout the year so we can change trajectories for kids. We want to get to 87 and 88% of kids doing well in the FAST test Sept Jan and May. That would be a 12% increase from fall and winter. Enrollment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This school year we have 468 students enrolled, our highest in Mr. Litwin's tenure (maybe ever). When people enrolled, we asked why students came in, "the word on the street is that it's a good school." Behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last year, we had more than 340 kids who never saw Ms. Cole or Mr. Litwin for behavior concerns, so those students' behavior was all managed in the classroom. We had more than 1,300 good news calls made last year for student behavior. We had a 6.5:1 ratio of good news calls to behavior referrals. Behavior is very strong overall, but our students who are Black or African American are more than 2 times as likely to be referred for behavior. There is a lot of self-reflection and thought about how teachers approach things, and reflection on how we see kids in the classroom. We're doing work to be sure we're providing the front-end support needed for all kids to be successful. 	Principal Litwin	15 min

Agenda Item:	Who:	Time:
<p>Core beliefs around behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All kids are all our kids. Every staff member is responsible for supporting all kids, not just their class. • We believe that behavior is communication. If a student struggles to follow expectations, they may have lagging skills, and/or need support for emotional regulation. We may need direct instruction to support those students. • We want to develop the feeling that we support each other. Classmates support one another too. If you have a classmate with a temper tantrum, teachers can help classmates understand what's happening. • As students get older, we help them understand that some students have learning differences and may be on the autism spectrum. We want students to realize that we all have things we're working on, and none of us are good at everything. 		
<p>Our behavior approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work hard to build expectations and build relationships. We hold ourselves and kids accountable for our choices. We repeat these things, over and over. • The best way to help kids is to help them know what to do when they're not successful. • Schoolwide expectations include how to be safe, respectful, and responsible. • We focus on things that are within students' control. E.g. once a student arrives at school, if they're late, we encourage the student to move "with purpose" to class. • Classroom interventions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ De-escalation, humor, active supervision ◦ Problem-solving meeting with student ◦ Parent contact ◦ Formal intervention with or without assistance of the student assistance team (SAT) • Sometimes we have to look at special education or a 504 plan. 		
<p>English language learning (ELL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to support students learning English. We want to have clear expectations and that language instruction includes vocab in addition to concepts. Making sure we have diff scaffolds in place, like visuals in the classroom to support those students. • One of our greatest strengths is that so many of the students speak English. Students learning the language are totally immersed. We want students to have lots of opportunities to practice speaking. • 7-8% of Horace Mann students are English language learners. It's 40% at the district level. • I asked our EL teacher Regina Sheering what families might not be able to access school communications in English. The 2 main languages needing translation were Tigrinya and Spanish. 		
Personal devices		

Agenda Item:	Who:	Time:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy is that they can have devices but they have to be quiet. It's kind of "don't ask don't tell." The device should be in school mode where they can't access anything or off. We ask families to keep their devices at home, but some families are adamant that their child have devices because they are latchkey kids or go to child care after school and we don't resist in those cases. This is going well. We expected more pushback, but families are very supportive. We offer individual reminders and redirections if students have devices. Last year there were a lot of calls and texts during lessons, but we've seen very little this year (just 1 referral). Password management: 5th graders do have their own passwords, but it's generated by the district. This is to get into iPads. Many apps are on Clever. The students have been responsible with technology, sticking with only what we ask them to use. A federal regulation requires us to teach about cyberbullying and online safety. 		
<p>Treasurer's Report and Approval of the 2025-26 Budget</p> <p>Income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income is shifting because we're in the middle of Readathon and Give to the Max. We changed our donation platform to GiveBetter. Next meeting we'll have a more complete update on progress there. <p>Expenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expenses are on track with our budget so far. <p>Other updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PEX is a new prepaid debit card program we rolled out to teachers. Now, instead of submitting a handwritten form with a receipt and getting a check, teachers who have opted in can use a debit card and access PTA funds immediately. We had to move money to the PEX platform. We'll report on this every meeting. We filed our tax return today and we owe \$0 as a non-profit. We got a quote from LifeTouch, the yearbook provider. The quote came in the same as last year, but that's higher than the previous year. We failed to update the budget line item for yearbook, but this is not a change from last year. Otherwise, we would have to cut pages or shift to black and white. Classroom residency with Heart of the Beast proposed for the entire school, every grade, costing \$7,125. The board previously decided to support it. The expense falls within our budget for residencies. Ms. Commers is leading it. The residency can include "buddy circles," smaller groups of students doing more focused work. There are buddy circle options for another \$1k or \$2k. We agree to approve the buddy circles. Authorizing this expense does not preclude us from supporting future residencies. 	Sam (PTA treasurer)	10 min
<p>Teacher updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We just wrapped up parent-teacher conferences with close to 100% participation. We're looking forward to the Read-a-Thon challenge at the end. Some classrooms are doing their own reading challenges. Reading buddies have begun. 	Teacher reps: Mr. Lindskoog and Ms. Kortuem	5 min

Agenda Item:	Who:	Time:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College-bound kindergarten deposit day. It's coming up this month. St Paul is starting this with this year's kindergarteners. There will be a presentation with a counselor about how to save for a toy and then they can symbolically add to the account. 		
<p>PTA School Supply Proposal</p> <p>Background on the proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stacey Tsantir and Solena Fleming have proposed a pilot program in which the PTA would purchase all school supplies for the following year with parents paying (and PTA covering any gap). The PTA committee would buy upfront in cooperation with teachers. Goals are reduced waste, equity among students, and a general net benefit. We need to see if there's community support. Community feedback: We have received 64 responses so far—a very high response rate for a PTA survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no deadline for the feedback It's just a pilot, so if it doesn't go well, we don't have to keep it We had questions about price We want to be cost-sensitive and be sure families don't pay more than last year. Families report having paid \$20-\$50 per child. <i>What families like about the proposal:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saving time Recycling Equity (all kids have same supplies) Less waste Better process for teachers 1 person doesn't support the proposal. <i>What families don't like about the proposal:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main one - missing out on the fun of shopping for school supplies Concerns about cost Preferring to buy environmentally friendly things <i>Overall:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very supportive! Restating some of the concerns listed above We're getting quotes. None are perfect yet. The next step is going to teachers to narrow down the list. 	Stacey Tsantir and Solena Fleming (volunteers leading this initiative) Summarized by Katie (PTA president)	10 min
<p>Open Gym at HMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will host open gym Wednesday evenings 6-7:30 starting Jan 7. Trial run in January. If it goes well, we'll have it reserved Wednesdays through April 1. A committee of parents will take turns hosting (closing down, getting out and putting away equipment). There will be simple rules (water only, not a drop-off event, must wear gym shoes). A question: can we use Mr. Castillo's supplies or do we need to buy some? 	Alex Stuart (on behalf of Tasia)	

Agenda Item:	Who:	Time:
PTA volunteer open position updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need some individuals to take on a few smaller tasks like lawn signs • Emily reached out to Casey and Brandon, who have handled these in the past, and they don't have anyone in mind, but we have time to find someone. 	Annie and Emily (PTA volunteer coordinators)	3 min
Read-a-thon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the time of year that we panic because we're halfway through the month and the dollar amount is low, but we know a lot of money comes in later. • The kickoff went well. CSP Swim and Dive came and that was fun. Monday, we will do costume choices with the kids. • Updates are going out through the Perspectives. • The final expense: there was no charge for entertainment, and the only remaining cost is the pizza party and snacks for all grade levels. So, we're underbudget for Read-a-thon. 		
Auction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We reserved the space at St. Kate's again. Rusty the auctioneer is coming again. • The silent auction will run March 2-6th. • The auction will be March 6th. • The auction committee floated an idea of a fund-a-need at the end of the auction. Usually, we don't have a specific funding goal for that. The need could be school supplies so there would be something people would donate for specifically (depending on what happens with the proposal). The donations would go toward a reserve fund. • The theme for the auction will be "spy." 		
Thank-yous! We thank: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brigitte and Ms Ryan for landscape work • Teachers say "thank you" for the conference meals! • Directory helpers (Katie Bliss and Sarah Liuzzi) • Annie Mach for book fair • Family volunteer service committee (Lauren). This effort raised nearly \$3,000 for grocery store gift cards • Boo Bash committee thanks the PTA for supporting the pizza so no one had to front the cost 		
Open Forum/Action Items: <i>No other items</i>		5 min
Adjourn		7pm

Team Reports:

Read-A-Thon (RAT)

The RAT is officially underway! We kicked things off with an opening ceremony on Monday, October 27, where we unveiled this year's theme "Dive Into Reading." The Concordia University Women's Swim and Dive team joined us to lead some fun stretches and get everyone ready for a great month ahead. Information packets, which include a book for students to keep, have been sent home, and our new donation platform, GiveButter, seems to be working well! Donations can be made through Tuesday, December 9 and the closing ceremony will take place on Friday, December 12.

Make It Take It

Make It, Take It Holiday Craft Night, Thursday, December 4th from 5:30-7:30pm.

Bring the entire family to this FREE night of crafting for kids, sponsored by the Horace Mann School PTA. Stop by each of the 5 craft stations, plus get your photo taken in the holiday photo booth. No drop-offs please. Siblings welcome. Please [RSVP](https://tinyurl.com/HMSmakeit) (<https://tinyurl.com/HMSmakeit>) for the event so we can plan for supplies. We are also looking for event volunteers and donations - check out what is needed [here](#). For any questions contact Grace Hanson at gjhanson1@gmail.com.

Free Family Fun Night

Friday, November 21, from 6 to 7:30pm

Game night: our first Free Family Fun Night of the year is coming up in Holleran Hall! Families are welcome to bring in a picnic-style dinner to enjoy while playing games with friends. We'll have light snacks and a variety of games to choose from, but welcome you to bring your favorite game(s) to play, too! We hope to see you there!

Auction

Silent Auction will run March 2 thru 6, culminating with the in-person Live Auction on Friday March 6, 2026 at St. Kate's.

Directory

The final version of the directory was released to families in October.

Conference Meals

The PTA supported teacher conference meals last week and this week through a combination of PTA funds and family donations of food.

Family Volunteer Service

As of Nov 11th, the family volunteer service committee has collected \$2,965 worth of grocery cards for SPPS families at Horace Mann and other elementary schools. SPPS school support staff is sharing gift card donations with families struggling with food insecurity in light of the lapse of food assistance benefits.

The committee will meet Nov. 20th to plan future family volunteer events for winter and spring 2026. If interested in joining the planning effort, reach out to jillbathke@gmail.com.

Landscape

We had a successful grounds and garden cleanup on Saturday. Over 300 pieces of trash collected, 30 bags of yard waste, garden beds tucked in for the winter, and the discovery of a sweet surprise that was hidden in the bushes (from the large tree that was taken down earlier this school year).

—

HM PTA website: www.hms-pta.org If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions please email web-admin@hms-pta.org

Employer match: We also encourage families to check with their employers as many offer a company match to the cash donations made by their employees

Current Board Members:

President: Katie Bliss, president@hms-pta.org

Vice President: Alex Stuart, president@hms-pta.org

Treasurer: Sam Smith, treasurer@hms-pta.org

Recorders: Sarah Liuzzi (sliuzzi@mathematica-mpr.com) and Bethany Hyde, recorder@hms-pta.org

Volunteer coordinators: Emily Phelps and Annie Mach, volunteer.coordinator@hms-pta.org

Communications: Amanda Prutzman, communications@hms-pta.org

Teacher Representatives: Amy Kortuem and Mark Lindskoog, teacherrep@hms-pta.org