



Harmony Public Schools

Minutes

August 23, 2025 HPS Board Meeting

Date and Time

Saturday August 23, 2025 at 9:00 AM

Location

9321 W. Sam Houston Pkwy S,
Houston, TX 77099
3rd Floor El Paso Meeting Room

**We will serve breakfast after the board meeting is concluded in the fourth floor meeting room.

Directors Present

H. Koc, H. Sherwood (remote), K. House, M. Argin, O. Celepcikay, S. Koch

Directors Absent

L. Gonzalez

Guests Present

A. Ayyildiz, Amine Elhiyat, C. Lambert, E. Akyildiz, E. Altun, E. Cavusoglu, F. Ay, Guvanch Yazgeldi, Helen Miller, J. Hoffer (remote), N. Bayhan, U. Alpaslan

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

O. Celepcikay called a meeting of the board of directors of Harmony Public Schools to order on Saturday Aug 23, 2025 at 9:03 AM.

II. Public Comments

A. Public Comments

None.

III. Consent Agenda

A. Consider Approval of Previous Board Meeting Minutes of July 26, 2025

S. Koch made a motion to approve the minutes from July 26, 2025 HPS Board Meeting on 07-26-25.

K. House seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. Consider Approval/Ratification of the Minutes and of the Actions of the Finance Committee Meeting on August 9, 2025

S. Koch made a motion to approve the Minutes and of the Actions of the Finance Committee Meeting on August 9, 2025.

K. House seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

C. Consider Approval/Ratification of the Minutes and of the Actions of the Academic Committee Meeting on August 9, 2025

S. Koch made a motion to approve the Minutes and of the Actions of the Academic Committee Meeting on August 9, 2025.

K. House seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

D. Consider Approval/Ratification of the Minutes and of the Actions of the Governance Committee Meeting on August 9, 2025

Dr. Celepcikay reminds the board that the minutes for the Governance Committee cover our upcoming board retreat which will be held the weekend of September 27th.

S. Koch made a motion to approve the minutes from Governance Committee Meeting on 08-09-25.

K. House seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

IV. Review of HPS Quarterly Investment Board Report of June 30, 2025.

A. Review of HPS Quarterly Investment Board Report of June 30, 2025.

Ebru Akyildiz, Chief Finance Officer of Harmony Public Schools, presented the Quarter 4 Investment Report to the Board of Directors. She stated that the investment officers are

responsible for preparing and submitting a written report of investment transactions for all applicable funds on a quarterly basis. For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024–2025, the total interest earned was \$2,066,969, with an ending market value of approximately \$186.5 million in total investments. Ms. Akyildiz also reported that the projected total earnings from investments for the fiscal year are approximately \$7.5 million. This item was also presented during the August 9th Finance Committee meeting as well.

V. Consider Approval of 2025-2026 HPS Employee Handbook.

A. Consider Approval of 2025-2026 HPS Employee Handbook.

Ms. Helen Miller, Director of Employee Relations, presented the proposed updates to the 2025–2026 Harmony Public Schools Employee Handbook and requested board approval. The updates include several important revisions aimed at aligning with best practices and recent legislative mandates.

First, under the section on Direct Deposit (Page 24), it was clarified that employees will be paid via direct deposit, and check payments will no longer be a long-term option, though one-time exceptions may be made as needed. The Employee Benefits section (Pages 26–28) now includes detailed information about HPS employee benefits, a best practice in the education sector. Substantial updates were also made regarding Leave Policies for First-Year Employees (Pages 40–50), including the removal of the “Leave at the End of Summer” and “Summer Extra Leave” policies due to lack of use and associated complications. A new definition of a first-year employee has been added: an individual in their first 12 months of employment, or a re-hired individual who has not worked for HPS in the 12 months prior to their rehire date.

Further updates clarify Non-FMLA leave limitations for first-year employees, such as a requirement that leave to care for a newborn or newly placed adopted child must conclude within 12 months of birth or placement. In cases where both spouses are HPS employees and both are in their first 12 months, they are eligible for a combined six weeks of leave. When one spouse qualifies for FMLA and the other is a first-year employee, a combined 12 weeks of leave may be granted. The policy also notes that additional leave may be available as a reasonable accommodation for pregnancy or childbirth-related limitations unless doing so would cause undue hardship to the employer.

On Page 54, a new policy on Reporting Employee Injuries was added. Employees will be docked time missed for medical appointments related to work injuries unless those appointments are mandated by HPS or the workers' compensation carrier. In such cases, HPS will either compensate for the lost time or allow the use of the employee's PTO balance. Updates to Unacceptable Employee Conduct (Pages 62–64) reflect recent internal and industry-wide cases that necessitated clearer guidance.

Several updates stem from newly passed legislation. Under Senate Bill 965, a policy on Religious Speech or Prayer (Page 7) has been included, affirming employees' rights to engage in private, voluntary religious expression during duty hours, as long as it is not coercive or school-sponsored. Senate Bill 571 prompted a number of revisions, particularly under Hiring and Registry Reporting Requirements (Pages 8–10, 64, 85–88,

103–104). The bill tightens eligibility and reporting standards to prevent individuals with a history of misconduct from moving between educational institutions (“passing the trash”). It also requires that Harmony only employs individuals approved by TEA, not listed in the Do Not Hire Registry, and who pass criminal background checks. Contracted entities must likewise ensure compliance with background checks. Pre-employment affidavits remain in place, and failure to disclose required information will result in termination. Additionally, if Harmony is notified of an employee’s certificate revocation (Page 64), the employee must be immediately removed from student-facing duties and terminated promptly.

Under Reporting Educator Misconduct (Pages 85–88), SB 571 mandates that Harmony must report to SBEC within 48 hours if an employee is terminated or resigns due to specific forms of misconduct, such as abuse, inappropriate relationships, or boundary violations. The parent or guardian of any affected student must also be informed in a timely manner. The reporting timeline to Child Protective Services and Law Enforcement (Pages 103–104) has been updated from 48 hours to 24 hours.

Lastly, in response to Senate Bill 12, the handbook now includes a section on the Prohibition of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Duties (Page 82), which bans DEI programs and staff assignments unless required by anti-discrimination laws. SB 12 also restricts certain Classroom Discussions (Pages 14–15), prohibiting instructional content on race, gender identity, or sexual orientation unless explicitly required by TEKS or related to a recognized holiday such as Black History Month. Additionally, students may not be required or rewarded for activities tied to lobbying or public policy advocacy.

M. Argin made a motion to approve the 2025-2026 HPS Employee Handbook updates as presented.

H. Koc seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VI. Approval of Adoption of New and Revised HPS Board Policies prepared based on the Legislative Up

A. Approval of Adoption of New and Revised HPS Board Policies prepared based on the Legislative Updates.

Mr. Umit Alpaslan, Deputy Superintendent HPS, presented the agenda item titled "Approval of Adoption of New and Revised HPS Board Policies Based on Legislative Updates." Mr. Alpaslan provided a comprehensive overview of multiple policy changes and additions required in response to recent Texas legislative actions.

He began by addressing updates to HPS Policy 1.1 – Board Meetings, explaining that Senate Bill 12 introduced Education Code §26.0071, which mandates school boards to adopt a Parental Engagement Policy. This policy includes requirements such as holding board meetings outside of typical work hours, placing public comments at the beginning of each meeting, and creating an online portal for parents to submit comments to campus or district administrators and the school board. In addition to these updates, two other legislative measures—House Bill 1522 and Senate Bill 413—require extended public notice for meetings, budget posting, and timely preparation and posting of board meeting

minutes and recordings. Mr. Alpaslan states luckily we already have many of these items in place.

Mr. Alpaslan then introduced a new HPS Policy 1.22 – Parental Engagement Policy, developed to formally establish standards aligned with TEC §26.0071. The policy affirms Harmony's commitment to parental engagement by ensuring parents can communicate directly with administrators and the Board through a centralized online portal.

Next, he discussed the adoption of HPS Policy 2.1.17 – Student Health Curriculum. Under Senate Bill 12 and TEC §28.004, charter schools must adopt instructional materials addressing human sexuality education and prevention of child abuse, family violence, dating violence, and sex trafficking.

Additionally, a new HPS Policy 3.51 – Student Health Advisory Council (SHAC) was introduced. This policy complies with Senate Bill 12 and outlines the purpose, membership requirements, responsibilities, and meeting protocols of the SHAC. It also mandates an annual report and the publication of student health-related statements in the student handbook and on the school's website.

The Board was also briefed on updates to HPS Policy 3.3 – Admission and Enrollment. Due to recent changes, geographic boundary restrictions tied to ISD lines have been removed, allowing Harmony to enroll students from any school district. Furthermore, under updated regulations, schools are now permitted to exclude from admission any student with a criminal record or one who has engaged in certain conduct, such as offenses leading to disciplinary placements or expulsion.

Mr. Alpaslan proceeded to outline changes to HPS Policy 4.12 – Reporting Employee Misconduct. Senate Bill 571 and House Bill 4623 introduced stricter reporting requirements and created new potential liabilities for schools if staff fail to report suspected abuse or engage in sexual misconduct with minors. The policy has been revised to reflect shortened reporting timelines and greater accountability.

A new HPS Policy 3.50 – Concussion Response Policy was also proposed. As required by TEC §38.173, schools must have a policy outlining proper procedures for responding to student concussions sustained during school-sponsored activities or while on school property. Harmony's new policy ensures compliance and student safety.

Mr. Alpaslan then presented HPS Policy 4.212 – Prohibition on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Duties. In accordance with TEC §11.005, this policy prohibits school employees or contractors from being assigned or engaging in DEI-related duties. A physical and electronic copy of this policy must be distributed to all staff and contractors.

Lastly, he addressed updates to HPS Policy 3.21 – Use of Personal Communication Devices (Rev'd 8.23.2025). In compliance with new legislation, students are now prohibited from using personal communication devices—such as cell phones, tablets, and smartwatches—on school property during school hours. The policy also outlines disciplinary actions for non-compliance.

The policies mentioned above were shared with the board members for their review.

K. House made a motion to approve the Adoption of New and Revised HPS Board Policies prepared based on the Legislative Updates.

M. Argin seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Dr. Celepcikay announces that this will be our last meeting at the current Central Office as next board meeting will be the board retreat and starting in October the meetings will be held at the new Central Office location.

Mr. Ay announces that academic ratings have been posted and 85% of our campuses are A-rated which is the highest Harmony has ever had.

H. Koc made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

K. House seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:53 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

C. Lambert