



AUGUST 2026

NEWSLETTER

Featuring
BARBER
PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Greetings from Chief Education Officer Isaiah Pettway

Happy August, Highland Park!

I hope everyone has found time to reset, recharge and make lasting memories with loved ones this summer. The first day of a new school year is almost here, and we couldn't be more excited. It promises to be another year of growth, achievement and opportunity.

In my May message to you, I talked about momentum. We had plenty of it then, and it hasn't slowed down over the past few months! We continue to make progress at warp speed, doing our best to advance our community at every turn.

Among our biggest highlight of the past few months is the creation of the Highland Park Promise Scholarship by the Board of Education in June. It's a bold new investment in our students' futures that reflects exactly the kind of district we're building together — one we're able to make thanks to careful fiscal stewardship of district resources. I'm proud to report that the district has officially climbed out of a longstanding operating deficit that has existed since 2012. We are entering the 2026-2027 school year with a positive fund balance for the first time in over a decade!

We're feeling more than a little pumped about these breakthrough developments, which is why we're also continuing to expand how we connect with you. Our new Inside HPSPD podcast series pulls back the curtain on how your school district operates and ways you can get involved in helping us put Children First. Additionally, we continue to host regular Coffee & Conversations sessions at our District office. These productive community dialogues take place the fourth Thursday of every month at 10 a.m.

As we look forward to the first day of school Monday, Aug. 31, I want to thank our families, staff and neighbors for the trust you continue to place in us. Together, we are proving that Highland Park's best days are not behind us. They're just getting started.

With gratitude,

Isaiah Pettway



Announcing the Inside HPSPD podcast

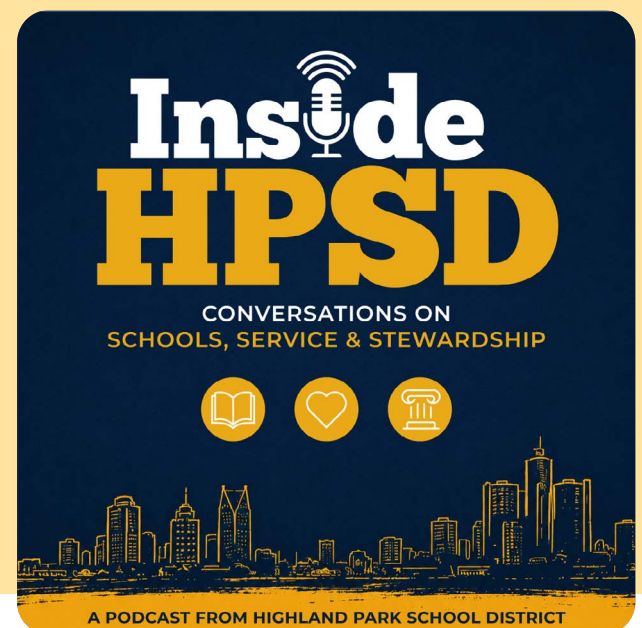
Have you ever wondered what a school board member does? How schools get funded? What a charter authorizer is? These questions (and others like them) are at the heart of the first episode of our new limited podcast series: Inside HPSPD!

We know Highland Park is full of dedicated community members eager to help us create a brighter educational future for our children, and we welcome your contributions.

These roundtable discussions provide community members with easy-to-follow, nuts-and-bolts facts about HPSPD operations.

They explain what we do, why we do it and how you can help.

Our first discussion, "So You Want to Be a Board Member?" is now live! You can check it out at <https://hipark.org/podcasts/>.



Our Promise to Highland Park

The School District of the City of Highland Park is proud to introduce the Highland Park Promise Scholarship. Approved by the HPSD Board of Education at its June 9 meeting, this award shows our deep commitment to helping the children in our community attain the highest possible level of academic achievement. Promise scholarships will provide post-secondary financial support to every graduating high school senior who calls Highland Park home.

Beginning in fall 2027, any student who is a resident of the City of Highland Park and graduates from high school will be eligible to receive a \$1,000 scholarship. The award can go toward:

- Four-year colleges and universities
- Community college
- Trade and technical programs
- Apprenticeships
- Other postsecondary training programs

The scholarship helps address a longstanding gap for Highland Park families. As HPSD does not presently operate a high school, its students must attend grades 9-12 in neighboring districts. Yet, as residents of Highland Park, these students are typically ineligible for those districts' own Promise Scholarship programs.

Our district has been vocal about its commitment to putting Children First, and this is a real example of that pledge. We want every Highland Park student to know that this community is firmly invested in their future, no matter where they receive their diploma.

The program will initially be funded through the district's restricted student activities fund, a resource pool established to carry forward the legacy scholarships and gifts that existed when HPSD operated as a traditional district.

This scholarship builds on our recent financial turnaround. In November 2025, HPSD officially eliminated its operating deficit seven years ahead of initial estimates. This positions the district to expand its offerings and reinvest in the community!

Looking ahead, the Board intends to appropriate a percentage of its annual fund surplus, along with community fundraising efforts, to sustain and grow the Highland Park Promise. Additionally, the Board plans to increase the scholarship amount for students who graduate from an HPSD-operated high school once the district reestablishes one.



Highland Park Happenings

HPSD continues to shine! The 2025-26 school year went out on a high note as we celebrated the advancement of our eighth-grade scholars. We can't wait to see what they do at the high school level! We also recognized the 2026 Barber Prep Teacher of the Year Kira Appleman.

Other year-end highlights included a final round of attendance awards, the Barber Prep International Fair & Art Auction, the spring Sounds of Motown concert and an HBCU information panel.

The educational fun continued into the summer months with Barber Prep's sports and drumline camps!





5 Reasons to Enroll

Have you enrolled your scholar for the 2026-27 school year yet? Finding the right educational fit is easy! Here are five reasons families chose Barber Preparatory Academy:

- 1. **Award-Winning Academics:** Barber Prep follows a future-forward, college-prep curriculum. The school has earned the prestigious ACCEL Gold Award — a distinction given for exceptional academic achievement.
- 2. **Culture Counts:** Barber Prep features a nurturing, close-knit environment where every student is seen and supported.
- 3. **Safe and Secure:** With strict safety protocols, secure visitor systems and proactive attendance programs, your child’s well-being is the top priority.
- 4. **Dynamic Extracurriculars:** Featuring drumline, sports, international fairs and interactive reading challenges, Barber Prep keeps your scholar’s mind engaged in and out of class.
- 5. **Your Neighborhood School:** Part of our district’s rich educational history, Barber Prep is a school by and for the people of Highland Park dedicated to providing our children with a strong platform for future success.

School Board on the Road

Educational excellence is an ongoing goal at HPSD. We further its growth by championing a culture of internal improvement. Leading by example, our Board of Education has been diligently working to improve its institutional knowledge and streamline processes to better serve Highland Park children and families.

Board members have been active learners, going to significant lengths to identify and implement best practices. Members have attended four national conferences and participated in multiple state and local training sessions.

Conferences attended by board members have included:

- 1. CUBE Conference (The Council for Urban Boards of Education) in Los Angeles, CA
- 2. National School Board Association Annual Conference in San Antonio, TX
- 3. National Association of Charter School Academies Conference in Houston, TX
- 4. Michigan Association of School Boards Conference in Acme, MI
- 5. National Charter School Conference in New Orleans, LA

HPSD CALENDAR



Board of Education Regular Meeting



District Holiday (No School)



Board of Education Regular Meeting



First Day of School



Board of Education Regular Meeting



Professional Development Day (No School)



District Holiday (No School)



Professional Development Day (No School)

CHILDREN FIRST!

Focused on student success through rebuilding, growing and achieving.



**High Expectations
for Growth &
Achievement**



**Welcoming,
Safe & Nurturing
Environment**



**Transformative
& Visionary
Leadership**



**Community as
Partners in the
Educational Process**

ENROLLING NOW FOR PK-8



www.hipark.org
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