

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WORKSESSION MINUTES – January 12, 2021

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The worksession meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom pursuant to the notice sent to each member. Action was taken.

Mr. McDowell called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Yocasta Brens-Watson, Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Mr. John O’Shea, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Mrs. Kim Ruiz

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams (arrived 7:04 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Mr. Gerald Benaquista, Mrs. Yolanda Koon, Mrs. Kim Conti, Mrs. Ann Hart, Mr. Craig Wojcik, Mr. Barry Loessel, Mrs. Maureen Guilfoyle, Mrs. Sandra Paul

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Lester Taylor, Esq.

Mrs. Minneci led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Koon read the statement required under the “Open Public Meetings Act”, a copy of which is on file in the office of the Board Secretary.

Mrs. Brens-Watson read the District’s mission statement.

Comments from Public on Resolutions:

None

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved at next week’s meeting.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel.

Superintendent’s Report:

Mr. Benaquista stated good evening, I will give you a brief report of next week’s superintendent report – we will have our student liaisons to share with us. We have been

meeting with one of the student liaisons, along with other students, to talk about what they spoke about last month. We will also report on the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Report (HIB) for period one and we will also report on the Student Safety Data System Report (SSDA) for period one for 2020-2021 (formerly Violence and Vandalism Report). We will continue to hear from the PTA and good things that are going on in our schools and our collaboration with the PTA. We will have an AP/Honors update. They have been meeting weekly since November to get this done. I will also give an update on returning to hybrid. Also, I will continue to share all the good things that are happening in the district.

Mr. McDowell stated new Board members if you can attend the PTA meetings of your school. I went to the Battle Hill meeting last night and they had questions about if the buildings are ready and when school will open. Please reach out to the PTA's that you are responsible for. Mr. Benaquista stated I will share the Zoom links and meeting dates with the Board members once compiled.

#### Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Ruiz gave an update of the Education Committee meeting. Mrs. Ruiz stated we met yesterday. The Board members of the education committee are myself, as chair, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Minneci and Mrs. Brens-Watsons.

We had a robust agenda. The first thing we spoke about was the Kean articulation agreement which spoke about at prior meetings. We currently have students enrolled at Kean through that articulation agreement. They are taking a class called Speech Communication as Critical Citizenship and the class is through the School of Communication, Media and Journalism at Kean. This course is free for our students and they earn college credits. They will start on January 16<sup>th</sup>.

We also discussed the FAST grant which was \$7,500 grant from the NJEA. Lisa Krauz applied for that grant. The moneys from this grant will be used for the event that we have in collaboration with Relay for Life at the football field. The children read books and other activities there. We had that last year as well.

We also received an increase in our CARES grant in the amount of \$71,662 – you will see that on the agenda under fiscal for approval. Those moneys will be applied toward technology. The district will order more laptops for our classrooms in order to get ready for hybrid teaching. Every teacher from 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade has a laptop in their classroom so this funding source will go towards laptops for all 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom.

We also received an increase in our CARES County funds around \$30-40,000 and that was used in December for PPE.

The PSAT will take place on January 26<sup>th</sup>. There are 500 students registered; it will take place at the high school and all CDC guidelines will be followed.

Mrs. Ruiz had technical issues.

Finally, we discussed Amistad curriculum resources. The backup looked like it was resources rather than curriculum. I will turnover this part of the presentation to Mrs. Minneci.

Mrs. Minneci stated we had a discussion as to whether this item was curriculum and after doing some research it is really curriculum resources. We wouldn't have passed QSAC if we didn't have the State Amistad curriculum implemented. We do have it implemented and we did pass QSAC at the last round. We are voting next week on the curriculum resources. We have the State implemented Amistad curriculum throughout K-12. The district took another step and this is what the agenda is. They expanded on the State curriculum so staff could expand their strategies to teach. The State content areas are in reading, math, science and social studies but took another step and expanded so we have supports in all courses including electives.

Our supervisors, Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Moran, Mr. Ghiretti, Mrs. Guilfoyle and two teachers work on expanding the curriculum in September and October and this was done to ensure that every teacher in the district is able to implement more strategies to support the State curriculum. They did this in collaboration with Elizabeth and Piscataway school districts. There are several other districts in this State that have expanded the curriculum. The district wants to ensure that the uniqueness and diversity and systemic racism in society is addressed appropriately in accordance with all the grade levels K-12.

Mrs. Ruiz had a question if it is year long or just during certain months. This is a year long course and it addresses the specific groups in those highlighted times – Black History month, Hispanic month, Women's History month, Holocaust – this is a curriculum that is taught throughout the year. All social groups are studied through the Amistad Curriculum throughout the year.

The expansion of the State Amistad supports the teaching strategies for teachers to use when they are driving instruction relevance to our students. This is just to supplement and give our staff the resources to use.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated my question last night was should we change the name from "approving curriculum" to "approving resources" – the backup states it is a resource, not a curriculum. Mrs. Minneci stated yes we should add it to the top line.

Mr. Benaquista stated thank you, I did have a conversation with Mr. McDowell today about updating that for next week to make it clearer. I would like it updated to read "K-12 Amistad Resource Guide". It is a resource guide and not curriculum. Where it is helping us is we took the State resource guide, added to it what we needed, as well as infuse other cross curriculum – science and math could reference this guide to use and teach Amistad across curricula so that will be updated on next week's agenda.

Mr. McDowell stated E-6 next week will read "Approve Resource Guide". Mr. Taylor stated for the record, I believe the Amistad Commission adopted this back in 2002 and you are correct, it is not a standalone, it is incorporated into the district's history curriculum, so it is appropriate as Mrs. Darby indicated.

Mr. Benaquista stated to clarify the FAST grant, this is a grant that one of our media specialist applied for. It was awarded through the NJDE; however, no money is coming to our district. It is an award amount but the books will be given to us through NJEA – so Mrs. Koon knows we are not receive this \$7,500 grant, the grant is in the amount of \$7,500 for the reading material to give to the kids.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated E-5 the calendar is changing because there are no mid-terms – correct? Mr. McDowell stated correct, there are no mid-terms. Mr. Benaquista stated we went to full days from half days.

Mrs. Ruiz presented the Education Committee agenda items.

#### E-1 SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent’s Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period December 15, 2020 to January 12, 2021, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

#### DISCUSSION:

None

#### Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Mr. O’Shea gave an update of the Fiscal Committee meeting. Mr. O’Shea stated we had our first meeting yesterday. Myself, Mrs. Minneci and Dr. Francis are on the committee. Mrs. Koon attended as well.

There were questions regarding F-1 to F-3 and Mrs. Koon explained them. We ask Mrs. Koon to give a synopsis of why it is there and what does report mean and why it needs to be certified.

Mrs. Koon stated the State requires that on a monthly basis to approve and certify your Treasurer’s Report, Secretaries Report and incumbrances of one and two as certified. F-1 is the Treasurer’s Report is essentially a snapshot of our cash balances at a particular time – these are our ending cash balances as of December 31, 2020. F-2 is the Secretary’s Report and is comprised of a couple of components – your balance sheet, which consists of your assets, liabilities and fund balances. The second component is a statement of your revenue sources and the third component is your statement of appropriations or expenditures. We have over a thousand budget line items and they are grouped by a State code. This is a summary of all of our expenditures. F-3 is to certify that the Treasurer’s and Secretary Reports do match. The cash from your Treasurer’s Report is balanced to your balance sheet cash item by fund. We do have segregation of duties. We hire an accountant from the Town who certifies our Treasurer’s Report so that is a check and balance.

Mr. O’Shea stated this is a monthly thing that we must certify and send to the State. I just wanted to give you a clearer understanding of why we have to do this on a monthly basis.

Mr. McDowell stated you said an outside agency certifies this. Mrs. Koon stated we have a treasurer of moneys who reconciles our bank statement as a check and balance. We also do a reconciliation. We send her documentation and she does a reconciliation so we have another set of eyes looking at these documents as well.

Mr. O'Shea presented the Fiscal Committee agenda items.

Mrs. Ruiz asked F-8 we approve these just in case we need them. Mr. O'Shea stated yes.

F-9 – the out-of-district placement list – this is an area that we discussed last night as to the number of children that are out of district and the cost factor, especially for special education. If you look at it you will see what the cost is and it is something we have to address. They all need to be educated. As Dr. Francis stated we have to start looking a little bit better and not just taking any out-of-district school to send our children. The cost factor is a major consideration.

F-13 – if Mrs. Koon can explain where the \$71,662 is coming from and where it is going? Mrs. Koon stated I would like Mrs. Guilfoyle to answer. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated that was the first grant we received, and it came from the stimulus from Washington. This is the CARES Act – ESSER Grant and they added more funding to it because when they did the original formula, they had money left over and ended up redistributing the remaining amounts. We are putting the \$71,662 into buying 101 laptops for each classroom in the elementary grades.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mr. O'Shea, seconded by Mrs. Ruiz, for adoption:

**F-16 APPROVE TEACHERS EMPLOYED THROUGH LEARNWELL**

Approve teachers employed through LearnWell to provide bedside instruction for District students on an "as needed" basis for the 2020-2021 school year in the amount not to exceed \$10,000.00, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes [Account #7693/11-150-100-320-01-19].

**F-17. APPROVE KID CLAN SERVICES – OT, PT, SPEECH LANGUAGE EVALUATIONS**

Approve Kid Clan Services to conduct occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech language evaluations for district students. The cost of each evaluation is as follows: \$370.00-occupational therapy, \$370.00-physical therapy and \$335.00-speech language; total expenditure not to exceed \$14,000.00 for the 2020-2021 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes [Account #11-000-219-320-01-19].

**DISCUSSION:**

None

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci , Dr. Morgan, Mr. O'Shea,  
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mr. McDowell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

#### Operations Committee Resolutions:

Dr. Francis presented the Operations Committee agenda.

#### DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated the security drills – are they still happening because there are staff in the buildings? Mr. Benaquista stated yes, we are required to do the drills and the State sends out recommendations for emergency drills. When the students return, we will do more drills and we will tell everyone not to get in close proximity.

#### Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Dr. Francis presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

#### DISCUSSION:

None

#### Policy Committee:

Dr. Morgan presented the Policy Committee agenda. Dr. Morgan stated distance learning policy and policy 5516 – use of electronic communications and recording devices. Before we move for a vote, we need a policy number for distance learning policy. Mr. Benaquista stated Mr. Taylor, your office did the draft, do you want to advise on the policy number.

Dr. Morgan asked attorneys do policy? Mr. Benaquista stated a couple of months ago the superintendent asked our attorneys to help us draft these policies; that is my understanding. Mr. Taylor stated yes, legal counsel does often attend policy committee meetings as well as consult with the administration on policies as quite a few of them have to comply with existing statutes, federal or administrative regulations. This policy was specifically requested by administration.

Mr. McDowell asked was this policy recommended by the NJSBA. I know they have sample policies that we are allowed to use. Mr. Benaquista stated Mr. Tatum was asking for policy related to COVID for a little more guidance. The distance learning policy is talking about the learning during COVID.

Mr. Taylor stated the policy for electronic communications did not anticipate and/or address the circumstances you and every other district found themselves in during COVID. This policy was to update to account for those issues. Your existing policy prohibited staff from communicating with students with electronic communications. This policy allows this obviously because staff and students have to communicate by way of email, etc.

Looking through my notes and in consultation with my partner, this policy was requested by the Board for us to work with the administration to craft; try to take into account those real life scenarios you were working with regarding distance learning, recording, participation by students, parents, etc.

Dr. Morgan stated the State did give us three policies which I have been asking about since August – 1648, 1648.2 and 1649. Have we approved those policies? Mr. McDowell stated I don't think any of those policies have been presented by the policy committee.

Dr. Morgan asked is there a policy number for distance learning? Mr. Taylor stated there may not be a number because we were asked to do it by the Board/administration. If there isn't a number, we can just give it a number. Dr. Morgan asked should we vote on a policy that we don't have a number? Mr. Taylor stated it won't be a fatal flaw because it can be incorporated into a policy manual. It is the worksession, so you don't have to approve it tonight.

Mr. Benaquista stated the policies that Dr. Morgan mentioned, I think it is a good idea if Dr. Morgan would share them with me. During the COVID pandemic, the State did provide guidance on what the district should adopt. If you want to share them and maybe we can work on them. Dr. Morgan stated that is the plan as I am the chair of the policy committee but I know I have been asking about this for the last four months. I will make sure that goes on our agenda and I will send it to you Mr. Benaquista to prepare in advance. Mr. Benaquista stated I do remember you speaking about that over the last few months.

Mr. Taylor stated I'm looking at your manual and my apology for not putting a number on it. The policy meets the current state of the law as existing executive orders from the Governor and other State regulations. Your current electronic policy is in the 4000 section – 4119.26. I would recommend that we make this 4119.27.

Mr. Benaquista stated in section two it talks about attendance and policy 5113. Mr. Taylor stated it is just a reference to your attendance policy which is 5113.

Mr. McDowell asked Dr. Morgan do you want to amend your resolution to include that number? Dr. Morgan stated if I can make a recommendation to hold off for another week so that I can review this to make sure that we are voting on the correct thing and I'm looking at it and it says "distance learning policy" and I know that the distance learning policies that I just read off – I'm not sure exactly what this is. We can have an offline discussion but I'm not sure if we are presenting this to the public correctly.

Mr. Taylor stated I'm looking at the district website and there is no 1648, 1649 on your website. Dr. Morgan stated it wasn't done. Those are the policies that the State recommended that we adopt and it was not done. Mr. Taylor stated we can consult tomorrow at your convenience to review what may have been recommended by the State. Again, this recommendation or request from the district Board and administration for the distance learning policy may have been prior to Strauss Esmay, prior to NJSBA and/or the State adopting their proposed policy. I will be happy to talk to you.

Mr. McDowell stated I agree, not to vote on these two policies tonight, Mr. Taylor and Dr. Morgan can talk about those, even with the other policy members and we can come to a conclusion next week.

#### Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Williams presented the Residency Committee agenda.

**DISCUSSION:**

Mrs. Darby stated she has a question that she will ask in Executive Session.

**Approval of Bills:**

Bills will be approved at next week's meeting.

**Unfinished Business:**

None

**New Business:**

None

**Comments from the Public:**

Susan Lipstein stated on behalf of the Education Foundation that we have our grant applications for 2021-2022 school year are available. They are on our website [www.tuef.org](http://www.tuef.org). Maureen Guilfoyle has to approve them before they are submitted. The due date is March 15, 2021. If you are interested, they are available.

Lyn Cornacchia stated someone mentioned the computers for the teachers, is that including the pre-school and kindergarten teachers? Will they get computers if and when we go back to class? Or are they supposed to be using their own computers? Mrs. Ruiz stated I asked that question last night and my understanding is that at this time, there will not be computers purchased because those classrooms have iPads in them; so the funding will be used to buy computers for 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Lyn Cornacchia stated from my understanding, the computers are for the teachers not necessarily the children. The computers we have in our classrooms now, I can be wrong, don't all have the camera accessibility. If we are teaching and we have kids that are virtual and we are in the building, that was what I was asking. I know the pre-k class is a separate entity, and I know they get a grant from the State, but we only have five iPads per classroom and they are using their own devices. I wasn't sure what was going to happen with them. I was mainly asking about the teachers if they were going to be getting computers to teach. Mrs. Ruiz stated I was told that the classrooms have a computer for the teacher. I was not aware that they didn't all have the camera accessibility so that is something to discuss with central office. Mr. Benaquista stated I will make a statement about that next week.

Catherine Sharp stated I heard something at the beginning of the meeting and I hope I misunderstood what was said. I believe it was with Mr. O'Shea was talking about money issues and he mentioned money for out-of-district schools and we would have to check into more alternatives to the schools because of the prices. Let's not make the cost of tuition the top priority in picking an out-of-district school for our special children because we should be looking for the best educational facility for them and if it costs us a little more money, then maybe we can tighten our belts on something else. I would hate to see the price of tuition being the top priority in picking a school for our special children.



Jollie Doyle stated I wanted to clarify something about the computers. We have nothing in our rooms. We have an iPad to use for a program that we could really never start. I'm using two devices in my house to teach. If we don't have a computer, especially since our kids will have Chrome Books and on days I would have 18 children on virtual. There is no way we can teach unless I take my Mac into school which I plan on doing anyway because I need two devices. I'm a little confused about the specifications that were given. Can someone give me clarifications because I want to make sure I do the best for my kids.

Mr. Benaquista stated next week I will give an update on that; the teachers will get an update on Thursday through a Town Hall that I'm doing with them.

Ann Margaret Shannon stated UTEA president. I just want to thank Mr. McDowell and Mr. Benaquista – I thoroughly enjoyed the tenor of this meeting. I want to bring good news from the UTEA. We have been trying very hard to get some positive PR for the district. We just had our first of 10 events at the Caldwell Parsonage. We are dedicating a special day to each school and inviting the families and students. Originally we were going to give them snacks but a dear friend Mr. Arminio made a great suggestion – instead of giving them snacks, we purchased gift cards at local eateries so that we can give them to the parents to say thank you for bringing your family to the Caldwell Parsonage to learn about the great history of Union. We had our first one on Sunday; it was Battle Hill School day, Mr. McDowell did join us and I ran out of gift cards. It was very successful and I do owe someone a gift card. We will continue to advertise. It is one school per day to try to keep the numbers down with COVID. We did reservations and I really hope that the community will take advantage and that is one of the FAST grants that we have been working on. The other FAST grant that was mentioned earlier. All of these grants the UTEA is giving – Lisa Krauz is the coordinator for that grant. We were not able to do the grant last year because of COVID so there was a little mix up there. Hopefully COVID will not mess it up this year. That is community grant. FAST is Family and Schools Together and that is any kind of grant that we can do outside of the school building. Unfortunately I can't buy Chrome Books for in school activities so we concentrate on community involvement. One of the things that we are working on is community schools, the social justice grant to take 25 educators to DC to the national headquarters. We are working with Mr. Hoyt and Mrs. Osty on the courtyard and we are making a lot of progress trying to get grants to improvement, not only the physical surroundings, but also to get a lot of PR out there to show the people in Union that you should go to Union High School and stop living in the past. It is a great school. I went to it, I taught at it and I really am truly happy that the UTEA is really working hard to get involved in these community projects. I invite all of you to keep watch on social media for the rest of our Parsonage school days.

Mr. McDowell stated Board members, the school days at the Parsonage would be a good opportunity, especially the school you are assigned to, to meet the families and students of your school.

Vito Nufrio stated I would like to reiterate the comment expressed by Mrs. Shape and for the past 10 years I have come to know Mrs. Sharpe about being all about the kids but I want to emphasize the importance of not in any manner or fashion to assume that there are so many schools out there that will take special ed students – there aren't. There is a limited number and

certainly Mrs. Conti and her staff should be consulted as to which schools are available to us and more practical for our children.

Rich D'Avanzo stated UTEA vice president. It is that time of year and unfortunately when a contract runs out that we need to start moving ahead with some dates so I will be sending an email to you and Mrs. Koon and hopefully something can get arranged soon during these times. Coincidentally we are all on the same year now as the maintenance department and administrators. You have a lot of work to do.

I don't know if you heard of Governor Murphy's executive order yesterday; in particular, student growth objectives that are used to base the teacher evaluations being pushed to the side. In particular, as a parent of a senior in high school, not having to worry out that exit test for 12<sup>th</sup> grade thank goodness. It is just another test. When I have colleagues that contact me in general, it is a great think to hear when people I don't usually hear from say what's going on with all this communication. We are going to find out information, as we are stakeholders, and eventually getting to a hybrid position in the buildings. I had to throw kudos to Mr. Benaquista for reaching out to staff and they are interested as we move forward through this pandemic and of course with the talk of vaccines on the horizon – people are on edge and everything else but hopefully we can get through this together and do what is best for our students.

Elsie Mackey stated I just wanted to get some clarification on the comment by Mr. O'Shea regarding out-of-district students. I think it is important that the message is clear and the communication is clear to the community. Those of us that are out-of-district don't want to be out-of-district. It is a very isolating feeling. My children miss out of a lot of in district activities and it feels like they are not part of the community. What normally happens around this time which is budget time, it gives off the impression that all of the budget rules for the district belongs to special services and children with disabilities. My prayer and my hope is that this Board will stop that practice of doing what normally happens – can you guys please give some clarity because there seems to be a lot of miscommunication coming across about the comment. We would greatly appreciate it.

Mr. Benaquista, this is something that I asked of Mr. Tatum. Can the special education community get some updates on where we stand? What are you getting from the State in terms of the students that desperately need to get back? Some of the kids are behind, out-of-district students are back in school, in district students are not in school. If you can communicate to the parents, we would like to know what is going on. It would greatly help us navigate this journey.

Dr. Francis stated I think Mr. O'Shea said something to the fact that maybe I recommended that we choose what places that they go for out-of-placement. I don't think he meant that. What we had in our meeting was that we were talking about the out-of-placement cost is \$13 million a year and that it accounts for 149 students that are on the list. We were talking about ways to save money as it came to special services. I did make a comment about what we tried to do in the past with Mr. Tatum was to try to bring some students back to save money. Sometimes that actually costs more money. I think as a Board we don't get to choose where students go. It is usually done in collaboration with the Director of Special Services as well as the IEPs. I don't know what was totally said by Mr. O'Shea, we did talk about not

limiting ourselves to State contract vendors even though they are on an approved list. We talked about bringing the accountant for special services to work closely with Mrs. Koon to see what is going on with the finance there. I hope that what was said, I think my name was brought into me saying that I would try to control where these kids go to school for out-of-placement but I don't think that was said. Mr. McDowell stated that goes a long way of clarifying things.

Mr. O'Shea stated I want to thank Dr. Francis for speaking up. Let me clarify what I am saying. It is unfortunate that these children need to be out-of-district but because of certain situations they have to be. We need to send them to certain facilities that can accommodate them rightly so. What I'm saying is yes, these children need to be educated; I'm not saying that it is the Board's responsibility to pick and choose where a child goes but I do believe as a Board, each should be looking at the bucks. Just because we have children out-of-district, there is possibilities of bringing some of the children in district. This was something that I did at another school district that we had this major problem; in fact far more than this district is having presently now. You look out of the box and we were able to do somethings in house; that is all I'm saying. I'm not asking that we have to bring children back and send them to certain schools because of the finance. What I'm trying to say is it would be wonderful if some of these children could be mainstreamed. There is nothing wrong with that. I'm not saying we have to look at other schools and if one school is x-dollars and the other school is y-dollars we are going to the y-dollars – that is not my intention. My intention is to look at the entire picture. There is other ways that some of these children may stay in district in a situation where we can make them mainstream; that is all I'm asking and looking at. Look out of the box.

Suehay Monge stated Mr. Benaquista, I just wanted to know if there was an update on the status of the PSAT for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders that is supposed to be administered in January. Has there been any feedback regarding the committee that was assembled to discuss the honors/AP criteria or moving away from the rubric? Mr. Benaquista stated next week we will be giving an update on the AP/honors committee is at. They have been meeting since November almost weekly. I have information to share next week.

As far as the PSAT, we are all set to go. Unless the health department says they are not recommending have the PSAT; we are set and will follow all the guidelines and keeping the students safe. Our high school is big enough to social distance the kids and keep them in small groups. We have an entrance and exit plan, keeping them social distance, wearing masks. The date is January 26<sup>th</sup>. I am meeting with the health department this week.

Aracely DiGirolamo stated congratulations Mr. Benaquista for his new appointment as an Interim Superintendent. I want to congratulate all the new members of the Board of Education. I want you to know that we all are really hoping that you can work together with the rest of the community and the parents for the betterment of our children, so welcome.

I want to thank Mrs. Ionta for the wonderful job she has been doing along side with the coaches and all the teachers in charge of our sports in the school district. Mrs. Ionta has done such a great job and my children are very excited to participate in the sports and I want you to know that I feel safe to send my children to do the sports. My son has participated in cross country and right now he is doing track. My senior will be participating in swimming and we are

very excited and we feel safe and grateful for the amazing job the sport's department is doing in the district.

In regards to the situation we were discussing earlier in the meeting that has to do with the out-of-school placement students, I want to mention that more than the financial situation that you mention, what I think really gets to us parents of special needs children is the fact that the Board members, some of them have mentioned in the past, that our special needs children are always an extra weight to the financial situation in our school district. As a parent with a special needs child, we are tired and we feel insulted that it has been said over and over that our special needs students always have to be the ones who have to carry on top of their shoulder the fact that our school district had to spend more money. For all I know, the State gives our school district extra help financially. It is really unfair that our special needs students always have to carry, on top of other things, that our school district has to mention that it is a big weight financially. I think all we have to do as an adult is to make sure that we do our math correctly and get this done the right way.

**Motion for Executive Session:**

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Ruiz, that the Board go into Executive Session at 8:25 p.m. to discuss the following subject matters without the presence of the public in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b: personnel, student privacy, and matters falling under attorney-client privilege

Please take notice that minutes will be taken of the discussion conducted during the executive session and the Board will disclose the minutes of the executive session when the disclosure will not result in unwarranted invasion of individual privacy or prejudice to the best interests of the Board of Education and provided that such disclosure does not violate federal, state or local statutes and does not fall within the attorney/client privilege. Action may be taken when the Board reconvenes in public session.

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci, Dr. Morgan, Mr. O'Shea,  
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mr. McDowell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

The Board returned to public session at 9:38 p.m. (Mrs. Minneci left executive session at 9:15 p.m.)

**MOTION TO ADJOURN:**

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Brens-Watson, seconded by Mrs. Regis-Darby, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

**AYE:** Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Dr. Morgan, Mr. O'Shea,  
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mr. McDowell

**NAY:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

**YOLANDA KOON  
BOARD SECRETARY**

