

The business meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on February 20, 2025, at the New Providence High School/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, by Mrs. Cuccaro, Board President.

Present on the roll call were Laura Castellano, Bernadette Cuccaro, Dr. Kristen Empson Hayden, Stacey Gunderman, Amanda Marano, Joseph Walsh, and Donna Zane. Also present were Dr. Lauren Zirpoli, Superintendent of Schools, Joseph Ugialoro, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Jonathan Keaney, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Supervision, James Testa, School Business Administrator/Board, and sixty-three (63) members of the public.

Mrs. Cuccaro led in the salute to the flag.

Mrs. Cuccaro read the following statement:

This is a public meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with PL 1975, Chapter 231, in that a notice was made in conformance with Section 13 of the Act.

Whenever the business of the Board requires it to convene to a Closed Session, the session will begin no later than 9:30 p.m. At the conclusion of the need for a Closed Session, the Board will reconvene for the public portion of the meeting. At that time the Board will complete any other business that may be before it and the public will then be given an opportunity to be heard before the meeting is adjourned.

BOARD PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Mrs. Cuccaro greeted the public and her comments are as follows:

At the March meeting, we will be honoring our four teachers of the year. I would like to take a minute to recognize Ms. Brenda Avila, Mr. Brandon Hill, Mrs. Bonnie Cabezas, and Mrs. Kristen Salsbury tonight for their achievements; these remarkable individuals have been recognized by their peers, students, and parents for their dedication and excellence in teaching. Their commitment enhances our student's learning experiences and significantly impacts our entire community. Thank you for your hard work, creativity, and passion for education. We are proud to have you and all of our teachers and staff as part of our district; collectively, you all make a difference. As a reminder, kindergarten and first-grade registration for the 2025/2026 school year is now open. This process is completed entirely online and the link is on the district website. We encourage everyone with incoming students to complete their registration by Friday, March 14th so we can plan for the upcoming school year. As we're heading into the busy season for all of our schools, please take time to read the District communications sent out on Thursdays so that you can stay updated on all that is happening around the district.

STUDENT REPORT

Dr. Zirpoli asked the Vice President of the Senior Class, Robert Bress, in the absence of the student representative, to present his report. Mr. Bress' report is as follows:

Good evening, everyone, I am thrilled to be back to provide you with an update on the incredible achievements and successes of our students and staff at NPHS over the past month.

Let's start with the outstanding performance of our Boy's and Girl's Basketball teams at the Spread the Word Event on February 1st, where they both secured victories against Governor Livingston. The event was made even more special with halftime performances by the Shining Stars. The Boy's Basketball team continued their winning streak with a Blackout Game on February 4th, which raised money to support those affected by the recent wildfires in California. The team played Milburn tonight and they kicked off the

first game of the State tournament next Wednesday. Special kudos go to the Boys' Freshman Basketball team, which won the Union County tournament this past Monday against Elizabeth. Our Girls' Basketball team is having an incredible season, boasting an impressive record of 23-2, including a win last night against Roselle Catholic in the county Semi-finals. They are set to compete in the Union County Championship this Sunday against Westfield at Kean University.

In other winter sports, congratulations to both the Boys' and Girls' swim teams on competitive seasons. Our Girls' team advanced to the Final Round of the Central Jersey Group C NJSIAA Tournaments, just two points shy of winning.

The Boys and Girls Track and Field teams secured spots in the Group 1 Championships on February 23rd with stellar performances at the Central Group 1 sectional championships where the Boys placed 3rd and girls placed 2nd. New Providence came home winning sectional champion in three events including Daniel Poretti in the 55-meter Dash, Sohha Xenakis in the shot-put, and the girls' 4x400 relay team of Mirana Bournique, Sofia Espaillat, Milone Henry, and Libby Knight who also set a new school record!

The hockey team is scheduled to kick off the State tournament this Monday against Freehold Township while boys wrestling has the district tournament this Saturday. Girls wrestling will also be competing in their regional tournament this Sunday. The Winter Cheerleading team took 1st place last weekend at their competition in Howell. We'll be cheering them on this Sunday where they will be competing in State Championships at Brookdale Community College.

We wish all of our winter student-athletes a successful finish to their seasons!

We're excited for this year's Spring Musical, Freaky Friday, which will have 4 performances from Thursday, March 6th through Saturday, March 8th. The shows will be at 7:30 pm on all three evenings with a Saturday Matinee show at 2:00 pm. Please come out to see our amazing cast, crew, and directors in what certainly will be some amazing performances!

Recently three NPHS students performed in the Central Jersey Music Educators Association Region Chorus at Monroe Township High School. Sophia Scott performed with the Treble Chorus, and Julia Halldorson and Rachel Zack performed with the Mixed Chorus. Congratulations to Mr. Ziegler and our talented vocalists!

Recently many of our students won Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. Mia Montero won an Honorable Mention in Photography. Michael Aranda won an Honorable Mention in the drawing. Camryn Bedder won a Gold Key in Mixed Media. Adam Moy won a Gold Key in Digital Art. And our first-ever sculpture entry, Sofia Cadmus won an Honorable Mention in Sculpture. Also, Isabella DeLuca was named one of the NJ Annual Emerging Artists as she was 1 of 33 students to have her work displayed at Kean University this past month. 17 of our students will be published in the Young Writers USA Fright Club - Ghostly Saga book.

Congratulations also go to our STEM students who recently had great success in both the Science Olympiad and TEAMS events and to NPHS's school's literary magazine, Per Scripturam, which has been selected to receive the rank of Distinguished in the 2024 NCTE Recognizing Excellence in Art and Literary Magazines (REALM) program.

Finally, I encourage everyone to get tickets for the upcoming PTSA Tricky Tray Fashion Show which will take place on Saturday, March 29th. We're expecting a great event raising money for our senior class.

This is just a glimpse of the amazing things happening at NPHS. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our students' success.

ENROLLMENT

Mr. Ugliarolo gave a summary of the current enrollment. Allen W. Roberts School has 635 students, Salt Brook School has 583 students, New Providence High School has 658 students, New Providence Middle School has 394 students, and lastly, 35 out-of-district students to give us a total of 2,305 students.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Zirpoli began her comments by congratulating the recipients of the Teacher of the Year. It was so nice to visit teacher classrooms to surprise them and let them know that they are the teacher of the year and year after year it never disappoints. I'd also like to say that this is my favorite board meeting, for many years, because this is what it is really all about. It's all about student learning. This evening, it's so nice to look out into the crowd and see so many of my colleagues who have worked so hard, as well as the students who are presenting themselves so professionally. We look forward to what you have to bring. I'd also like to thank Mr. Keaney, as well as, our department heads, and all of our administrators for their hard work on writing the curriculum report this evening, which each board member received in their board packets. I'd like to just update everyone on strategic planning, as the community knows, we are in the process of strategic planning. We just completed our sixth (6th) strategic planning session and we plan to have our seventh (7th) which will be on *Elementary Instruction, Curriculum, and Programming* on March 4th, it will be held in the Allen W. Roberts (AWR) media center. We are very hopeful that many families will come out of it. These sessions are meant to be listening sessions so we encourage as many parents as possible, as well as, teachers and students to come out because without you sharing information about where we want to head in the next five years it becomes difficult for us to ascertain what the community needs are, we encourage you to come out.

CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE

Mrs. Cuccaro then invited Mrs. Marano and Mr. Carangelo, Director of Athletics, to present the certificates of excellence to the girl's tennis team. Mrs. Marano then read the following statement:

The New Providence girls' tennis team has once again demonstrated their skill and determination throughout the season, challenging themselves against the top contenders in Union County. They regularly faced highly ranked state teams, including Kent Place, Summit, and Westfield. Embracing this challenge, the team focused on growth and improvement, carrying the confidence from their previous two state championship seasons into every match. This resolve was evident as they engaged in fierce competition against these formidable opponents.

Despite this rigorous schedule, the team finished the season with an impressive overall record of 10-7. In the state tournament, they continued the momentum from last year's squad by winning all five of their playoff matches, boasting an astounding combined score of 23-2 during this stretch! This remarkable performance led to a Central Group 1 state sectional championship, highlighted by a 4-1 win against Highland Park. Ultimately, the team achieved an overall State Championship, triumphing with a decisive 5-0 victory over Glen Rock at Mercer County Park.

This victory marks the sixth (6th) overall state title for the girls' tennis team and their third consecutive state championship! Additionally, this achievement brings the team's total to twelve (12) sectional titles, with eight (8) secured in the last nine (9) seasons! Congratulations to all players and coaches on a spectacular conclusion to yet another historic season! This team has truly etched itself in our athletic history as one the best to ever come through New Providence High School!

Additionally, Gianna Culver was awarded individual honors this season as she was crowned a Union County Champion! Gianna won the third (3rd) singles flight title by defeating second-seeded Kira Bhatia from Summit, 6-2, 6-3! Congratulations Gianna!

CURRICULUM REPORT ([LINKED PRESENTATION](#))

Mr. Keaney began his report by explaining how the curriculum is designed to meet the District's mission statement and the Portrait of a Graduate and to achieve the objectives outlined in Vision 2025, marking the end of a five-year strategic planning cycle. The following points are the Vision 2025 goals:

- Enhance elementary student programming for early student development and offer more resources and experiences to enhance student achievement.
- Enhance secondary programming to continue to enable student achievement, while preparing students for career readiness and post-high school academics.
- Implement a robust Social Emotional Learning curriculum for the District.
- Enhance the district facilities to develop a modern learning environment, considering collaboration, class size, grade configuration, and extracurricular activities.
- Continue to develop an innovative, collaborative, and modernized instructional framework focused on higher-level thinking, real-world problem solving, student autonomy, self-pacing, and the development of a student-centered, learner-driven classroom environment.

Mr. Keaney then invited Mrs. Kathy Yanni to present, alongside her were 1st-grade students, Phoebe Bass and Bennett Cuomo. Mrs. Yanni went on to explain how she designed a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activity for first graders centered around the significance of names. The activity began with a survey that parents had to fill out with two key questions: What is your child's name? Why did you choose that name? After that, the class read aloud the book "Alma and How She Got Her Name". The story features a character named Alma, who struggles with her long name and learns its importance through her father's guidance. Students then used the information gathered from their parents to create a craft.

Phoebe and Bennette then shared why their parents picked their names and why it is special to them.

This SEL activity not only helps first graders understand the significance of their names but also strengthens community ties and promotes emotional well-being through self-awareness and expression. By recognizing the stories behind their names, students can better appreciate their identities and the diversity within their classroom.

Mr. Keaney then invited Mrs. Brittany Heaslip to speak about the third (3rd) grade Math and ELA programs.

Mrs. Heaslip began her presentation by walking the Board through a math lesson that is presented to students, using the i-Ready math program.

She went on to explain how inside the classroom students use the Try, Discuss, Connect routine. A new problem is presented to begin the lesson each day, and then students are guided through;

- think time
- problem-solving
- partner talk
- whole-class discourse

Mrs. Heaslip then took a moment to share a math problem with the Board and the Board took a few minutes to solve the problem. Mrs. Healsip encouraged the Board members to use any type of method they would like to solve the problem.

After reviewing how the Try, Discuss, and Connect routine works, Mrs. Healsip emphasized the benefit of this type of routine in helping students to have respectful conversations and interact with other students, and throughout the year teachers can reinforce those skills.

Mrs. Heaslip then invited two students to talk about how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being used in the classroom, specifically in Language Arts.

Mr. Keaney went on to explain how AI serves as a supportive tool and a think partner rather than a replacement for traditional learning methods, and the District has provided guidelines on how to integrate AI in the classroom in a supportive way.

Third (3rd) grade students, Sia Agarwal and Mason Erber shared their experiences with AI in their classroom. They discussed how they had to write a persuasive essay. They shared that they first, brainstormed thesis statements by themselves, and in groups, for a change that they wanted to see or someone they wanted to recognize. Then, with the help of MagicSchool AI, they refined their ideas, leading to stronger arguments and better writing skills.

They also shared other different ways that students are using AI in the classroom, such as revising narrative writing with more descriptive language, helping with writing thank-you notes to people at school and in the community and getting book recommendations.

Mr. Keaney then commented that AI integration in education is not just about technology; it's about enriching the learning experience. By providing tools for brainstorming, feedback, and collaboration, AI empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey while supporting teachers in their instructional efforts.

Mr. Keaney invited Mrs. Michelle Testa and Mrs. Jackie Kaufmann to discuss how teachers use the i-Ready diagnostics to help students in the classroom.

Mrs. Testa referred back to Mrs. Heaslip's lesson example and explained that before beginning a new lesson, teachers can use the prerequisite report to see where students are at and see what students can continue to the next lesson or what students need a little more assistance.

Mrs. Kaufmann then explained how reading buddies are used to pair students in research-based, mixed-ability, and supportive partnerships. Teachers receive detailed reports on student performance across various reading domains, such as phonological awareness and comprehension. This data helps in planning targeted instruction and personalizing learning experiences.

Mr. Keaney then went on to invite Mr. Russel Anderson and eighth-grade students, Luke Rios and Swarit Samant, to discuss how AI is being used at the middle school level.

Mr. Anderson discussed the use of Magic School AI in writing assignments, notably Document Based Questions (DBQ) on Andrew Jackson's presidency. This type of assignment helps target writing, argumentation, source analysis, and evidence-based writing skills that are necessary for high school Social Studies.

Student, Swarit Samant, discussed how they were tasked to answer the question, Was Andrew Jackson more democratic or authoritarian? to use primary and secondary sources such as political cartoons and Andrew Jackson's State of the Union Address to write a five-paragraph response to the question. By using MagicSchool AI Mr. Anderson can give immediate feedback to students and give overall or specific writing feedback. However, all this feedback is teacher-controlled, contained, and customized. Luke Rios, shared his experience using MagicSchool AI to improve his writing. He stated that the AI program is easy to use and gives students simple and easy feedback, areas for improvement, and positive motivation to improve.

Mr. Anderson then shared that on the teacher end of the program, MagicSchool AI gives teachers the ability to analyze student performance data to adjust lesson plans and focus on areas where students need the most support. With AI handling initial feedback, teachers can spend more time on personalized instruction and less on grading.

Mr. Keaney took a moment to highlight the fact that this AI program is used as a think partner, something to help enhance the learning experience of students.

Mr. Keaney then moved on to speak about one of the Board of Education's sub-goals to expand the Middle School electives. In 2015, when the STEM program was being put together, the District wanted to have a clear plan on what and where they would want our students to be regarding the STEM program. They decided on the following key points:

- Grades K-4
 - Overview and exposure to STEM fields/occupations to generate interest.
 - Integrated real-world, problem-based learning connecting all four STEM subjects.
- Grades 5-8
 - Continued awareness and exposure to STEM fields occupations.
 - More rigorous challenging courses to model the academic requirements of STEM fields.
- Grades 9-12
 - In-depth STEM courses and STEM tracks available to prepare for college and career.

Thanks to the new Middle School bell schedule and a grant the District has been able to introduce new Project Lead the Way (PLW) courses. This initiative aims to provide students with hands-on, career-oriented learning experiences that foster engagement and practical skills. With the help of Mrs. Jennifer Pasuit, who applied and received a grant, the District was able to fund Project Lead the Way courses.

Mr. Keaney then invited Eyad Elshamy and Ashton Green to present their experience with Automation and Robotics.

Both students discussed what they do in their robotics class and what projects they have created:

Engineering Notebook:

- Students maintain a notebook to document their sketches, test results, and reflections, mirroring the practices of professional engineers.
- Programming Skills:
 - Building on skills from previous grades, students learn to use loops, conditionals, and event handlers to control their robots.
- Mechanical Systems:
 - Exploration of gears, pulleys, and other mechanical systems to design functioning machines.

For their final project, students are tasked with addressing real-world problems. For example, one group designed a conveyor belt system aimed at optimizing factory efficiency while minimizing human error. This project involved programming a motor to simulate the operation of a real-world conveyor system.

By the end of the course, students not only gain technical skills in coding and robotics but also develop:

- Teamwork Skills: Collaborating effectively in groups.
- Real-World Connections: Understanding how their projects relate to actual engineering challenges.
- Career Awareness: Insights into future STEM career opportunities.

The Middle School robotics course is an enriching experience that prepares students for future educational and career paths in STEM fields. By integrating hands-on learning with theoretical knowledge, students are equipped with essential skills for success in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Mr. Keaney went on to discuss how the High School has gained a wide variety of new electives for students to choose from.

Mr. Keaney then asked Mrs. Melissa Halpern and student, Isabella DeLuca, To present the new elective; Wellness P.E.

Mrs. Halpern explained that Wellness P.E. was designed to foster overall well-being through innovative and nontraditional approaches to physical education. The application used in this elective is called PLT4M.

Program Overview

- Focus on Overall Wellness: The program emphasizes both physical and mental health, integrating various fitness modalities that cater to individual preferences.
- Diverse Activities: Students engage in a range of activities, including:
 - Yoga: Introduced as a means to relax and disconnect from daily stresses, incorporating poses, breath work, and relaxation techniques.
 - Strength Training: Focused on building muscle and physical fitness through structured workout splits.
 - Cardiovascular Activities: High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) and other cardiovascular exercises to enhance endurance.

Student, Isabella DeLuca, shared her positive experience being in this new elective she stated that she enjoyed the fact that students could set personal fitness goals and participate in activities that encourage self-reflection and emotional wellness. This prompts discussions about feelings and aspirations at the start of each class.

This program represents a shift in how physical education is approached, moving away from traditional team sports to a more inclusive and personalized model that caters to the diverse needs of students.

Mr. Keaney then introduced another new elective at the High School, Marketing. He invited Mrs. Wendi Millard and student Miriam Lawler to present their experience in the new elective.

Mrs. Millard explained that in this new elective students were able to engage in personalized learning by simulating the creation of a viable business plan and developing a marketing strategy. While students were working on this project, New Providence (NP) business owners were invited to help provide feedback to students. With the help of their feedback, students were able to not only learn but improve their marketing plans and business. She also shared a video that showed students collaborating with NP business owners.

Student, Miriam Lawler, then walked the Broad through the process of creating her business and marketing plan. Her business name is Mistretto, it is an AI-driven customized subscription-based coffee company that sells a wide variety of coffee beans, pods, and machines. She shared that she was very grateful for the feedback that she received from the New Providence business owners.

Mr. Keaney then introduced the last elective, Biomedical Engineering. He mentioned that in previous years he taught Biomedical Engineering, however, throughout the years there has been great growth in this elective. He then invited students, Brandon Maneely, Giada Durado, Maggie Liu, and Ram Panchacharam, and each student presented their project.

1. Drug Delivery System Model by Brandon Maneely

- Objective: To create a proof of concept for a drug delivery system.
 - The model aimed to simulate a timed release of medication over a period of 5 to 10 hours, though the prototype achieved a release time of 5 to 10 minutes.

2. Downsized Micro Pacemaker by Giada Durado

- Objective: To model a micro pacemaker that minimizes the invasiveness of traditional pacemaker

surgeries.

- The project integrated knowledge from nanoscience, focusing on downsizing the device using forces like magnetism.

3. Organ-on-a-Chip Microphysiological System by Maggie Liu

- Objective: To design a microphysiological system (MPS) that improves drug testing methodologies.
 - MPS, or organ-on-a-chip, utilizes stem cells from human tissue to create a model for drug testing.

4. AI Model for Decoding American Sign Language by Ram Panchacharam

- Objective: To develop an artificial intelligence model that interprets American Sign Language (ASL).
- Methodology:
 - The project utilized a dataset of 90,000 images from Kaggle to train the AI model.

Mr. Keaney then asked the public to give some feedback on the progress of the District in accomplishing the following initiatives for Vision 2025:

- Enhance elementary student programming.....
- Enhance secondary programming.....
- Social Emotional Learning curriculum.....
- modern learning environment
- innovative, collaborative, and modernized instructional framework
- all in the service of enhancing student achievement

The public all agreed that the District has made progress in accomplishing.

Mr. Keaney, concluded his presentation and thanked all the administrators, students, department heads, tech specialists, and teachers for all their hard work.

Dr. Ziproli thanked Mr. Keaney and all those who presented tonight. She then asked if the Board had any questions. No board members had any questions.

STUDENT SAFETY DATA SYSTEM REPORT

Mrs. Cuccaro declared the Public Hearing on the Student Safety Data System, for Reporting Period 1 - September 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024 open.

Mr. Ugliarolo presented the District summary for the Student Safety Data System report as of September 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

We had three affirmed incidents of HIB, zero incidents of weapons possession, two incidents of violence which were fighting, one incident of vandalism which was property damage, and three incidents of substance use confirmed. At New Providence High School we had three HIB Investigations, one of which was affirmed. At New Providence Middle School we had three HIB investigations, none of which were affirmed. At Allen W. Roberts Elementary School we had four HIB investigations, two of which were affirmed. At Salt Brook Elementary School we had two HIB investigations, neither of which was affirmed.

All of our investigations for Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying were completed within ten days as required by law. The nature of these HIBs was race, color, gender, gender identity, expression, and mental or sensory disability. The names of our investigators are: at the High School, Mr. Crisitello, at the Middle School, Mrs. Wittenberg, at Salt Brook, Mrs. Kwiatkowski, and Allen W. Roberts, and Mrs. Feliciano-Allen.

The discipline that was imposed was in and out of-school suspension, parent and teacher conferences, as well as individual counseling. The training we have conducted in programs that have been implemented to reduce HIB are policy, staff, and student services, as well as Strauss Esmay, which is our anti-bullying specialist training on law and policy. We have had training in social media and cyberbullying. We have in our health curriculum and instructional activities lessons that focus on bullying, our Character Education Program, peer relations, conflict resolutions, and social-emotional learning activities.

Mrs. Cuccaro declared the Public Hearing on the Student Safety Data System, for Reporting Period 1 - September 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024 closed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Cuccaro opened the meeting to the public at 8:21 p.m.

There being no comments. Mrs. Cuccaro declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 8:21 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Walsh moved to approve the minutes for:

Business Meeting/Reorganization Meeting: January 2, 2025

Ms. Gunderman moved to approve the minutes for:

Business Meeting: January 23, 2025

Closed Meeting: January 23, 2025

Mrs. Marano seconded the motion and it was carried on the following vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Cuccaro
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mr. Walsh
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

ACTION ITEMS

FINANCE ACTIONS

Mr. Walsh, Finance Chairperson, moved to approve Items 1 through 6 as listed below:

BOARD SECRETARY REPORT APPROVED

1. After review, we hereby accept the Board Secretary and Treasurer reports for January 2025. No major account or fund has been over expended in violation of financial obligations for the the remainder of the fiscal year.

BILL LIST APPROVED

2. Approve the payment of bills for February 2025, in the amount of \$5,328,971.29.

STATE-CERTIFIED COSTS PER PUPIL APPROVED

3. Approve state-certified costs per pupil for the 2023/2024 school year as follows:

Preschool/Kindergarten	\$15,245.00
Grades 1-5	\$16,915.00
Grades 6-8	\$16,203.00
Grades 9-12	\$18,095.00
Learning and/or Language Disabled	\$38,279.00
Preschool Disabled- Full Time	\$38,316.00
Preschool Disabled – Part Time	\$15,006.00

VOIDED AND REISSUED CHECKS APPROVED

4. Approve the voided and reissued checks.

Voided

<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Reason</u>
365160	11/14/24	1,850.00	11-402-100-890-01	Lost

Reissued

<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Account</u>
365640	02/20/25	1,850.00	11-402-100-890-01

DONATION APPROVED

5. Approve the generous donation from The Blackbaud Giving Fund towards purchasing a new upper playground at Salt Brook Elementary School, in the amount of \$50.00.

PRAVCO DEDUCT CHANGE ORDER APPROVED

6. Approve a deduct change order from Pravco to cover the cost of a walkway repair and carpet replacement, in an amount not to exceed \$14,743.65.

Mrs. Marano seconded the motion.

It was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Cuccaro
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mr. Walsh
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

FACILITIES ACTIONS

Mr. Walsh, Facilities Chairperson, moved to approve Item 1:

TECHNOLOGY DISPOSAL APPROVED

1. Approve the disposal of the following items which are outdated, broken, or no longer deemed necessary for school use:

Quantity	Item Description	Model/ISBN#	BOE#/Ser.#
1	Roland XP-10 Electronic Keyboard Music Synthesizer	#A135238	N/A

1	Korg X5D Electronic Keyboard Music Synthesizer	#054530	#2326
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Mrs. Marano seconded the motion.

It was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Cuccaro
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mr. Walsh
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

EDUCATION ACTIONS

Dr. Empson Hayden, Education Chairperson, moved to approve Items 1 through 3 as listed below:

2024/2025 HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, BULLYING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Per the 2011 Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, approve the recommendations of the Superintendent of Schools regarding the following 2024/2025 Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying investigations:

<u>School</u>	<u>Incident Report Number(s)</u>
Middle School:	4, 5
Allen W. Roberts:	3, 4
Salt Brook:	3

NEW AND REVISED SCHOOL CALENDARS APPROVED

- Approve the following school calendars:

- 2025/2026 (revised)
- 2026/2027 (new)

2025/2026 SUBMISSION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION-MEDICAID INITIATIVE (SEMI) PROGRAM APPROVED

- In accordance with the requirement of N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.3, the Board of Education authorizes the submission of a waiver request for the New Providence School District from participation in the Special Education-Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program. This waiver request is based on evidence estimating that the District will have fewer than 40 Medicaid-Eligible Special Education students for the 2025/2026 school year.

Mrs. Zane seconded the motion.

It was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Cuccaro
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mr. Walsh
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

Ms. Gunderman moved to approve Items 1 through 6 as listed below:

2024/2025 APPOINTMENTS APPROVED

1. Approve the appointment of the following people with the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools subject to the requirements of Chapter 116 of P.L. 1986 for the 2024/2025 school year:
 - a. Julia Grieco, long term substitute occupational therapist, \$29,387.00 (base \$66,039.00), effective 2/18/25 through 6/30/25 (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - b. Nida Abdulla, long term substitute teacher, \$28,646.00 (base \$64,372.00), effective 2/18/25 through 6/30/25
 - c. Michael Esnes, student teacher at the HS and MS, effective 2/1/25-6/18/25 (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - d. Kaileigh Volker, school psychology practicum student, effective 2/27/25-6/18/25 (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - e. Gavin Jakositz, lacrosse (spring), girls, 1st assistant, \$6,103.00
 - f. Jenna Stickle, lacrosse (spring), girls, 2nd assistant, \$5,231.00
 - g. Torrel Dance, substitute custodian (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - h. Laura Lee, substitute nurse (subject to issuance of certification) (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - i. Anna Darity, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary
 - j. Corvin Terzo, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary (subject to issuance of certification)
 - k. Arthur Cattano, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary

RESIGNATION APPROVED

2. Accept the resignation of the following employee:
 - a. Tanzeela Javed, playground/lunch assistant, effective 1/29/25

2024/2025 REVISIONS APPROVED

3. Approve the following revision for the 2024/20225 school year:
 - a. Katherine Witte, long term substitute teacher, \$45,385.00 (base \$58,186.00), effective 11/4/24-6/30/25

EXTENDED UNPAID LEAVE APPROVED

4. Approve the request of Euris Castillo, custodian, for an extended unpaid leave for the 2024/2025 school year, pursuant to federal and state law, effective 12/21/24 through 4/20/25.

UNPAID PATERNITY LEAVE APPROVED

5. Approve the request for unpaid paternity leave for Michael Criscitello, assistant principal, under the state Family Leave Act for a period of five days commencing 3/17/25 and ending 3/21/25, with continued health insurance benefits pursuant to law. (Based on 3/10/25 due date. Dates subject to adjustment by actual birth.)

Dr. Empson Hayden seconded the motion and it was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Cuccaro
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mr. Walsh
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

BOARD POLICY

Mr. Walsh moved to approve Items 1 and 2 as listed below:

FIRST READING POLICY APPROVED

1. Approve the following Policy on first reading:

Bylaws and Policies:

Policy 9163 (Mandated)	Spectator Code of Conduct for Interscholastic Events (Walsh)	New
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SECOND READING POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS APPROVED

2. Approve the following Policies, and Regulations on second reading:

Bylaws and Policies:

Policy 2260 (Mandated)	Equity in School and Classroom Practices (Walsh)	Revised
Policy 2411 (Mandated)	Guidance Counseling (Walsh)	Revised
Policy 3418	Substitute Compensation (Walsh)	Revised
Policy 5750 (Mandated)	Equitable Educational Opportunity (Walsh)	Revised
Policy 5755	Equity in Educational Programs and Services	Abolished

Regulations:

Regulation 2260 (Mandated)	Equity in School and Classroom Practices (Walsh)	Revised
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Ms. Gunderman seconded the motion and it was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Cuccaro
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mr. Walsh
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology: None.

Finance, Facilities, and Safety/Security: Mr. Walsh commented that the committee is still waiting on state aid figures and next meeting the tentative budget will be considered for approval.

Personnel, Management, and Communications: Ms. Gunderman reported that the committee met to discuss recent job openings.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Testa explained that every year board members review the code of ethics information and sign the acknowledgement of receipt. Mr. Testa briefly reviewed the PowerPoint and documents. He asked the Board to review and sign the acknowledgment and return it to him as they will be sent to the County office.

Mrs. Cuccaro also mentioned that this year the Administrators Association will be going through contract negotiations this year. Mr. Walsh volunteered to be chairman of this committee and Mrs. Cuccaro asked for two additional volunteers to serve on the committee. Mrs. Marano and Mrs. Zane volunteered.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Cuccaro opened the meeting to the public at 8:27 p.m.

Mrs. Meredith Rusu, 422 Union Avenue

Thank you for listening to our comments and our feedback. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to all of you tonight. I wanted to come tonight to speak on behalf of the families with siblings who will be split across elementary schools due to the redistricting plan. A lot of you here actually know me. I have a son in fourth grade at Allen W. Roberts named Matthew and a second-grade son named Luke, also at AWR. I served on the PTA board as Vice President of events for two years and I was chair in several committees, therefore I'm very familiar with the school, with a lot of the students, and all of the events that happen during the course of the year. I think the Board should reconsider instituting a one-size-fits-all, no-exceptions policy that impacts the handful of families who have older children at AWR and incoming kindergarteners in the next two years who will be zoned to Salt Brook.

Our family is not directly impacted but I can attest to the importance, socially and emotionally, of having an older sibling at the same school has had for our sons. When Luke was entering first grade he was so proud to have his brother there with him in third grade, in the same building. He had been looking forward, for years, to being in the big school building where Matthew was going and knowing that his brother was there and that he was following in his footsteps, maybe even having some of the same teachers and same experiences, as his older brother was a massive source of confidence for him. My understanding is that only a handful, as in single-digit numbers, of families are being impacted by the sibling split because of the redistricting. I happen to know four of those families because they have sons who are friends with Luke and those sons have younger siblings who are the same age as Matthew and Luke. It breaks my heart to hear those younger siblings asking if they will be in the same big school as their brothers and sisters, to hear Luke's friends wondering if they're going to need to switch schools, and if will they be able to go to the same Halloween parades?, will Mommy and Daddy have to choose which parade to go to because parents can't be in two elementary schools at the same time for the same event. I get that all of these things seem like small blips but who they are not blips to are six and seven year-olds. Beyond just the logistical nightmare of splitting up siblings between two elementary schools.

I'm not contradicting the need for redistricting but it's unclear to me why a concrete number of families with this specific sibling split has not been formally assessed. The number of families with siblings who would be split for 2025/2026 is a fixed number that should be available, it's not dependent on incoming families. I've heard of only four or five families that will be facing this burden for the next two years. That number shouldn't move the needle when it comes to redistricting. It is reasonable to try and accommodate them for the kid's sake and to not make reasonable accommodations is negligent. New Providence School District has made such a push for social-emotional wellness, that I can't fathom why these couple of kids would be forced to face this undue hardship. I know what a difference it made for my sons to be together. I have seen the impact of having a sibling with you and what it means to the kids to have parents at school events. I would hope that the Board would want to make that world of difference to the very few families facing the situation.

Christine Mellusi, 30 Wilbur Street

I am in zone B, and my street will be redistricted in 2026, thankfully my youngest daughter will turn five in August of this year, and she will be able to attend AWR with my older daughter who is in second grade. However, if she was born a few months later that would not be the case and I would be devastated. This is why I chose to speak tonight because while my children will be able to go to AWR together, I still care and have empathy for my fellow community members who might not be as fortunate. I remember back in 2013 when we bought our home, my husband was thrilled that we were zoned for AWR because he attended AWR himself along with his brother, his parents also both grew up in New Providence. I remember thinking it was funny that he would have such a strong connection with his elementary school but now I understand AWR is a special place, and New Providence is a special town. It's a small town where we care about each other and our community. I am an active volunteer at AWR. I serve on the PTA board and I've spent many hours revamping the courtyard at AWR. Volunteering my time both in the classroom, as a room parent, and in the library. I love being in the school and I love being part of the AWR community. I am disappointed by the decision to split siblings as part of the redistricting plan. While I understand that our town is changing and therefore requires a redistricting plan, I urge board members to put themselves in the shoes of the parents faced with this impossible position of having children at two different elementary schools. I ask the Board to consider evaluating this situation on a yearly basis over the next several years to determine how many families this actually impacts. There is a way to gather this information, I know you have already started by sending out a survey and I thank you for doing that. I think it is a great step and it's appreciated, however, I would have done the survey differently by only including families in zones A and D so you could have a clear picture for next year. For instance, imagine the survey indicates that five children should be rezoned to Salt Brook next year. If Salt Brook kindergarten classes are larger than AWR next year, why not just let them stay at AWR? The current methodology makes it feel like we are negatively impacting real existing families in an effort to accommodate hypothetical future families, as assumed in the demographic study done by Dr. Grip. The board has offered to make sure that elementary schedules don't conflict, but this won't be possible for all events. I worry about the emotional well-being of our parents and children put

in this situation. Children thrive on routine and consistency, I don't see how routine and consistency can exist in this situation; for example, drop-off at AWR is something that we are working to improve however even with improved efficiency it is not possible to drop-off at AWR and Salt Brook by 8:30 am without one child being tardy. I worry about the anxiety and stress this would create for both the parent and the child. New Providence is a great town because we care about each other please reconsider your decision to split siblings

Melanie Katz, 101 Woodland Road

I have two kids in AWR. My fourth grader is very shy and it took him a long time to get used to being around kids and having a good core group of friends and for him to have to leave AWR just because he has a younger brother would be awful. I know that there was some talk of the different events being held on different days, for working parents to have to leave early two days instead of one would make it harder. We are not one of the richer families in town, which means we are taking off work and that affects our finances. Also the school's events do cost money so now we have double the events we have to pay for. I just really hope that the Board can reconsider splitting up the siblings for the existing families. I can't afford to move across town to be zoned on the AWR side so my kids can stay. I will keep coming to the meetings, next time I will be more prepared. I just hope that you can reconsider.

Allison Caravano, 20 Edward Court

I wanted to thank Mrs. Amanda Marano and Dr. Kristen Empson-Hayden for taking the time to speak with me and responding to the email that I sent to every board member. To reiterate what I said in that email I asked that the board reconsider the current redistricting plan and adopt a more flexible and family-centered approach, particularly for the families in zones A and D who are currently most directly impacted. I asked that the Board evaluate the kindergarten class sizes at AWR on a year-to-year case-by-case basis to try and allow families with older children already enrolled at AWR to keep their siblings together. I'm very grateful that the survey was sent out and did my part to ensure that every person in my neighborhood received it and texted it to all of them. I would appreciate a follow-up as to when we are going to be expected to hear about the feedback on the survey. As a parent who has to figure out whether or not I will need to provide before and after care for my children because of a 15-minute buffer time and cannot be in two places at once. Our current daycare situation is trying to figure out if they will have enough space to accommodate kindergarten drop-off so I would like that information as soon as possible. I am currently on their waitlist but they don't know where my daughter will be dropped off next year so I would appreciate that information and any follow-up soon.

Ben Wolf, 476 South Street

I'm a parent of an AWR second grader and an incoming kindergartener. I appreciate the Board's consideration in looking at the redistricting plan and considering the families impacted. We had reached out to Dr. Miceli when the redistricting plan was first implemented because we would have been happy to put our older son into Salt Brook to keep our kids together. We were told we weren't impacted and now we're told that we are. My wife, Sam, is very active in AWR and has been making plans to get involved with kindergarten leadership and is very close to the parents at AWR. I want to echo those sentiments and understand that the Board is going to re discuss this. My understanding from prior meetings is that the decision here for what to do in the families with siblings is truly up to the Board's discretion. I would just hope that the Board use their discretion to do what's best for the community.

Akshay Mehta, 16 1st Street

I also want to talk about this rezoning project. This is my first Board of Education meeting. I do want to support the folks that just spoke about the concerns that they have. My older son is going to turn six this year, so he would have also been impacted if he had been enrolled last year into AWR. My understanding is we would have had to shift him or maybe his younger sibling. I do empathize with the parents who are facing this issue of splitting up their children. I also don't want to go through this. I hope you all consider a case-by-case basis, especially for the families who fall under these four zones and hopefully, we come to a

solution. How you can support kids in different schools and yet you know to maintain a good environment for them to grow and develop.

Allysa Tuite, 23 Bradford Street

I did not look at what zone we are in but my family is going to be redistricted for the 2026 school year. I have one daughter who will be entering kindergarten this year into AWR and then three years from now I will have a second daughter who is to be redistricted into Salt Brook. I just also wanted to express my support for the reconsideration of the redistricting and the different cases of separating families. I think everything has been said. I also wanted to acknowledge that I understand with the growth, that redistricting is necessary. I wanted to put forth that I have friends who live in other districts such as Denville, as an example, that currently are going through redistricting. I have a friend who lives in what they call a flexible zone, where their children can go to either elementary school but once the oldest child is in one school it's confirmed that the younger children will be given a placement in that school to keep the children together. I'm just proposing that we look at what other school districts are doing to handle the growth that's happening.

Mrs. Cuccaro declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 8:49 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

Mr. Walsh moved to adopt the following resolution:

This body shall on February 20, 2025, in the New Providence High/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, discuss in closed session, pursuant to Section 7 of the Open Public Meetings Act, specific matters which may generally be described as follows:

- Student Matters related to HIB
- Personnel

The minutes of the discussion in closed session of the aforementioned matters may be disclosed to the public after the final determination of action has been reached.

Ms. Gunderman seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

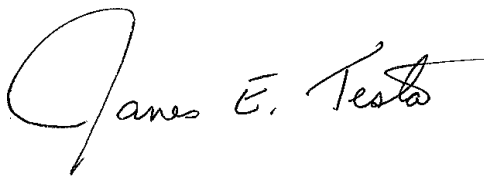
RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

The Board reconvened to public session at 10:55 p.m.

Mrs. Cuccaro called the Board to order. Board members present were Mrs. Castellano, Mrs. Cuccaro, Dr. Empson Hayden, Ms. Gunderman, Mrs. Marano, Mr. Walsh, and Mrs. Zane.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business before the Board, on a motion by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Dr. Empson Hayden, and carried unanimously, Mrs. Cuccaro declared the meeting adjourned at 10:56 p.m.



James Testa, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary