

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING**

February 25, 2021 – 5:36 p.m.
Remote - Zoom

Presiding: Comm. Kenneth Simmons, President

Present:

Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Susana Peron, Deputy Superintendent
Khalifah Shabazz-Charles, Esq., General Counsel
Boris Zaydel, Esq., Board Counsel

Comm. Vincent Arrington
Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz
Comm. Dania Martinez

Comm. Manuel Martinez, Vice President
Comm. Nakima Redmon
Comm. Corey Teague

Absent:

Comm. Jonathan Hodges

Comm. Simmons read the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend the meetings of the Paterson Public School District, as well as other public bodies at which any business affecting the interest of the public is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Paterson Public School District has caused notice of this meeting:

**Special Meeting
February 25, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.
Remote - Zoom
90 Delaware Avenue
Paterson, New Jersey**

to be published by having the date, time and place posted in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Paterson, at the entrance of the Paterson Public School offices, on the district's website, and by sending notice of the meeting to the Arab Voice, El Diario, the Italian Voice, the North Jersey Herald & News, and The Record.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was moved by Comm. M. Martinez, seconded by Comm. Arrington that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening and thank you, Commissioners. Since I'm always here, I've asked to be a standing public commenter at your meetings. Thank you for the opportunity. I know today we're here to talk about priorities and I had some I wanted to

mention. First, the key question that we always ask is how does this budget provide a thorough and efficient education for Paterson's children? I encourage you to keep asking that question as you put your priorities in place. It seems that we will have a little bit more money than we did last fiscal year, and this is good because we certainly need it. Please put some emphasis on social/emotional wellness for our children and our adults. Whether we stay virtual or have hybrid, there is definitely a need for that. Programs that improve student outcomes will never make up for the pandemic, but we can implement needs-based programming and instruction. Arts and Music is still required by the New Jersey standards. It's still required for a well-rounded education for all students so I implore you to leave some room for that. Our facilities, even with the ventilation upgrades that have happened over the past year, can no longer have crowded classrooms because of COVID, which I understand is here to stay even when we have herd immunity. Continue to look at full-service community schools and expand that initiative. Library services - as the grant opportunities come out from the state of New Jersey and other places, I encourage you to go after them aggressively. We will need more resources than the state aid will provide for us in the budget. I know we've done a great job gearing up our children with the technology that they need, but going forward they'll break and go missing so please also leave some room for that. The budget hearing happened. I was fortunate to be a part of that and to be a part of some conversations with the Governor's staff. The money that they are talking about now is without the CARES funding so there is additional funding coming as well. Consider that as you do your contemplations. Again, I'm watching for the legislative hearings and as soon as those are announced I will share that with you. There is some information on our page about testing. The US government has said they are still requiring testing, but there is an opening for states to ask for waivers. I'm asking you to join in the movement to encourage our state to ask for a waiver from the feds. There's information around that on the Paterson Education Fund Facebook page. A few districts have already passed resolutions supporting New Jersey asking for a waiver from standardized testing this year. Thank you so much for your time.

It was moved by Comm. M. Martinez, seconded by Comm. Arrington that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

DISCUSSION ON THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET PRIORITIES

Ms. Shafer: Good evening, Mr. President, Board Commissioners, and the Paterson community. Tonight, you'll hear from our Business Administrator, Mr. Leon Matthews, on the priorities of the district for the 2021-2022 school year budget. We have three major focuses that we are looking at for the 2021-2022 budget. They are to address student learning loss due to the pandemic, open school buildings with the hybrid model of in-person instruction, and provide a safe environment including mental health for our staff and students. You'll hear tonight all the different budget items that fall into these three categories. We have listened to parents, students, and all staff, and this how we came up with these budget priorities. We want to ask the Board for their input, for additional priorities if they have them. We'll take them at the end of the presentation as well as any questions that you might have. At this time, I'm going to turn the presentation over to Mr. Richard Matthews, our Business Administrator.

Mr. Richard Matthews: Good evening, Commissioners and the City of Paterson. Before I start, I just want to let you know that you are going to see two pots of money in the presentation. I just want to make sure we are clear that we did receive the CARES Act, the ESSER II funding. That money came to \$50,681,563. Just earlier today, we

received our state aid numbers of \$29,401,814. For the stuff that you are going to see in the presentation tonight, we haven't decided where it's all going to go. This is just the needs that we have identified over the last couple of months that we have to go through the budget and figure out where things are going to go. I'm going to go through the presentation and at the end we'll answer any questions. As Ms. Shafer said, the three main priorities are to address student learning loss due to the pandemic, to open up school buildings with the hybrid model with in-person instruction, and to provide a safe environment, including mental health for our staff and students. As I said to you earlier, under the ESSER II funding, this has been our allocation. We got these numbers just a couple of days ago. The total number is \$50,681,563. As I stated earlier, we got our state aid number today of \$29,401,814. I think that's pretty good for what we were expecting and what we are hearing over the last couple of months regarding what's going to happen with state aid. What you are going to see here is the department head, the person making the recommendation, what the need is, and you'll see the costs. It's going to be three columns and everything is going to aggregate at the end and that's going to come to a little more than \$25 million. In terms of security, salary costs of \$34,000 are being requested here. Currently, the contract has \$164,000 and we have a maximum of \$177,000. As work orders come in during the course of the year, these are additional costs that we are going to be looking to spend for different events such as recreation and overtime. Security is needed all throughout the district. In terms of what's required here, he needs four new guards for the Joseph Taub Middle School, one night guard, one guard for CR, and seven additional to provide additional monitoring for our restart plan, sports events, and recreation. The total cost for that need is \$408,000. Below that, what you see there is a request for one or two floating substitutes in the building in case a teacher gets sick during the school day. They want to be able to provide these floating substitutes in each building. It's one or two. Based on 140 days, the cost for Category A and B would be \$1.2 million. This is just for a floating substitute to be in the building in case somebody gets sick. We are trying to provide additional support for the teachers. For 40 units, that would be 80 substitutes. Ms. Coy is doing a transition program to support 35 to 40 special education students and there's a breakdown of the cost - social worker, five job coaches, five instructional aids, one OT, speech therapists, and a nurse. Below that is classroom development for transition. She's looking to do supplies and materials, recreation, kitchen, laundry room, career readiness room, career readiness room, bedroom and living room. Below that, you see expansion of special education programs for new enrollments, a new freshman, and transition program to open space at STARS Academy. One behaviorist that costs \$80,000, and transportation costs for the program would be \$45,000. Here you have Ms. Tsimpedes. A tutoring program to address learning loss associated with COVID-19, high school, 2,000 students at 40 hours, which costs \$652,982.00. We have a summer program to address learning loss due to COVID-19 at 20 sites with 12,000 students, Monday through Thursday. Those are the hours and that calls for 866 teachers. This is a summer program. We realize that is a very aggressive number, but kids have been out of school for more than a year. That cost would be \$3,876,394. Below that you see an after school program due to learning loss because of COVID-19. Again, 12,000 kids, 40 days, at one hour a day. Schools have flexibility of dates and programs. This is an October program. Costs include salaries of all staff. This number is \$1.4 million. As I said to you earlier, we haven't identified where this is going to be paid out of, but they are things that we see are definitely needed due to COVID-19. We have a Saturday program for 12,000 students. This is a 10-week program that starts in October. There's a \$2 million price tag on that. Below that is a reading specialist to address learning loss due to COVID-19, 22 additional teachers, Cost A 36 teachers at \$85,000, Cost B 18 teachers at \$85,000. The total cost for that would be \$3 million. Below you have two ELA intervention programs to address learning loss due to COVID-

19. The cost for that program was \$650,000. Below, she has math intervention, the ALEKS program.

Comm. Redmon: Mr. Matthews, I can't see the whole presentation. I can only see the math. Let me try to adjust my computer screen.

Mr. Matthews: Again, ALEKS is a program that's already in use. Two programs addressing learning loss for COVID-1, with a price tag on that of \$328,000. Nursing department, Kimler Williamson, two additional positions, additional support for nursing supervisor, \$75,000 each. The price tag is \$150,000. We will have to have temperature testing on the buses. We are looking at thermometers. The unit cost on that was about \$224. This is for aides to take the temperatures on the buses. That price tag is \$70,000. Regular education classes busing, bid for aides, 12 buses, temperature taking for COVID-19 protocols. That price tag is \$150,000. Below that is a bus driver for the district for students who cannot wear masks. The plan was to have our own bus driver that can drive kids around who can't use a face mask or a face shield due to sensitivity issues. The plan was to put those kids on a separate bus and to get a bus driver. We are pushing our own people to get CDL license so we can use our own in-house people, but right now that cost would be \$30,000. Here for the isolation rooms to have another substitute. You have the one or two substitutes for assisting the teacher or teacher aide if they call in sick. Here is another substitute, one per building, for the isolation rooms. We have to have additional staff to support the isolation rooms. The cost to add a substitute for one per building would be \$816,000. Provide an Opti-Clean air filter in every classroom for the entire district. Also, in the large spaces, like the cafeteria, the gymnasium, and places like that. That price tag is \$4 million. That's about 3,000 devices plus an additional 300 for excess inventory in case something was to happen to a filter that gets damaged for whatever reason. As part of this plan here and this price tag, we also are going to have a contract for maintenance and repair. We have two options with that. It's going to be a semi-annual or quarterly inspection. We want to make sure that this equipment is up and running and is getting the proper preventative maintenance so it doesn't break down and cost us money. Under the first year, we would have parts and material coverage. After the first year, we want to have a guarantee that if something were to break down we have a contract in place to cover any repairs or replacements. The next item is two additional trucks for central stores. There's a lot of demand going on in central stores regarding delivery of PPE and supplies. They are constantly receiving supplies and materials and making deliveries for schools. We just need two additional trucks over there. We haven't identified how it's going to be paid for, but there's definitely a need to have two additional trucks. Below, there's a need for a truck in the facilities and that price tag is \$50,000. We are constantly moving materials throughout the district, picking stuff up, picking up supplies, and making deliveries for various things throughout the district. This is to address student attendance in a hybrid model as per COVID-19 protocols. The price tag is \$500 per school to go to every school. It's \$30,000. We are looking at additional devices. The one thing that's happening with the devices is that some of them are breaking and some are getting legs for some reason. We have to keep replenishing our devices so that kids are able to work with their devices whether they are remote or in school. The other area here is cameras and additional hotspots. That price tag is \$160,000. Below that, you see stipends to help arrival and dismissal of kids at STARS Academy due to COVID-19. There's the price tag for that, \$75,000. Below that, you have 200 licenses for Credit Recovery for units one and two and the price tag is \$16,000. Over in facilities, we haven't really invested in facilities and this page here speaks to the things that we have to do to invest in facilities. One of the things that Mr. Mapp wants to do is match up a sector supervisor for each unit. There's a need for a new sector. Also, here is additional staffing regarding facilities and custodial services,

\$45,000. He needs a coordinator for environment and regulatory requirements. There are a lot of statutes and paperwork that's required that has to get done. He just needs additional staff to make sure that we're in compliance. Maintenance workers - a lot of our guys are spending a lot of time on emergency repairs and we're not spending a lot of time of preventative maintenance. If you can't spend time on preventative maintenance, everything the guys do is going to be shut down or emergency repairs. For instance, in the last two weeks we lost two boilers. Again, we have to invest in our equipment. We have to invest in facilities so we have the facilities that the staff requires. HVAC is a huge issue. I said earlier that the Opti-Clean is going to really address the air quality concerns that our staff is having. We need to invest in these because we are spending a lot of time on emergency repairs and we are not able to do the preventative maintenance that's required to keep our equipment running long-term. In grounds, I think we take it for granted. I think it's very important that when you pull up to a school there's good sidewalk appeal, that we can maintain the pavement, the concrete, and the grass. When people pull up a building, it looks like a nice place where you want to learn. We need to definitely make that investment in facilities so that we can provide facilities in terms of sidewalk appeal that is deserving of our students and staff. Supervisor of Trade – Grounds, and an additional truck driver. One of the things that's still on the table is we need to probably ask more of our people to go get their CDL so we don't have to hire truck drivers. To have our own in-house people with a CDL would be a big bonus and would save the district money. That's something that we have to consider moving forward. We've had a lot of devices. Everybody has their own device. Staff has their devices. We haven't really given the technology department the support to handle the additional devices. With the rollout of 40,000 devices, we have to be able to support when things go wrong, they have questions, or things need to be repaired or replaced. We have to support the effort of closing the digital divide. The cost to support technology is \$450,000. Below that with facilities is an electrician, \$52,000. We are constantly doing stuff that requires glaziers. I think we only have one in the entire district. This is the breath of what is required to meet the needs of the district. Senior specialist, it's more of an inventory person in central stores. As we get supplies in central stores, we need guys to pick through the supplies and make sure that the PO matches the order. That's a very labor-intensive process that we need additional staffing for, to be able to pick through the orders that come through central stores and get them on the vans or trucks to get to the schools. We can't have schools ordering materials and they are sitting in central stores and taking too long to get out. We have to turn that stuff around because things start to back up. We don't have enough staffing, especially in this environment right now where people are quarantining and going out. If you lose two people, stuff just sits in the warehouse and it doesn't get where it belongs. We have to turn supplies around a lot quicker. We have to make that investment. Mr. Mapp, regarding a secretary, there are things that need to be done as far as processing orders, remote payroll, and timesheet processing. It's really important that we make that investment. Here are the 175 air purifiers for the large rooms. Earlier, you saw the \$4 million price tag. That's was mainly for classrooms. This is more for large spaces. We are going to be able to make an order on the air purifier situation really fast. It's not going to be a long, drawn out process regarding going out to bid. We have ways to procure that will cover us spending money under a federal grant that's not going to require a long, drawn out bidding process. We are going to be able to turn some of this stuff around pretty quickly once we identify how it's going to be spent. Obviously, with the Opti-Clean and air scrubbers, that's something that would be covered through the grant that's not going in the local budget. The price tag is over \$4 million and this price tag is \$2.2 million. Between the two of them, you're looking at close to \$7 million when you take into consideration the maintenance contracts that we definitely have to have as we buy this more sophisticated equipment. We just can't bring it into the schools, plug it in, let it work, and hope it doesn't break down. We're

definitely guaranteed by a preventative maintenance contract. I think it's a smart investment to have maintenance contracts so we are not dealing with shutdown maintenance two or three years down the road where the cost for repair is going to be two or three times more than what a maintenance contract would've cost over the same period of time. Based on the needs assessment, the price tag right now is \$27 million. As I mentioned earlier, ESSER II funding, we received \$50 million. There's still some money left over in CARES Act I, ESSER I. As far as state aid, we received \$29 million. The budget team is going to be scrubbing through all of the budgets tomorrow between the hours of 10:00 and 1:00. At the workshop, we'll be prepared to give you guys a really good look at the 2021-2022 budget. Preliminary, I think we're in a much better spot than last year and we'll have a much better answer in terms of specifics regarding where we are with the budget next week. Ms. Shafer, that concludes the needs assessment.

Ms. Shafer: Thank you, Mr. Matthews. Before we go into any questions or additional priorities that the Board has, I just want to let everyone know that our next step now is to get the guidance. We have not received the guidance for ESSER II. Once we receive the guidance, then we'll know what costs are allowable to go into ESSER II. Then we'll be able to take some items from our local budget and put them in ESSER II so that we can balance the budget. Our next steps are to take the priorities and they're either going to go into ESSER II or they're going to go into the local budget. That will be our next step. Then we'll bring that back to the Board so the Board will know whether or not we have a balanced budget and what we'll have to do next. We are still waiting on the guidance before we can do that. At this point, we'll take any questions that the Board has and certainly any suggestions that we can add to the budget priorities.

Comm. M. Martinez: I guess my starting point and comment would be the windfall, for lack of a better word. The amount of money that we're having come in right now is probably unlike anything that we're going to be seeing for a significant amount of time. I think it's best that we invest some of the money in areas that are needed and also to the extent to which we are able to save that money for surplus purposes, rainy days, or whatever you want to call it. There are four specific buckets, and some of them were touched on in the presentation, that I would really want to focus on. One of those buckets is infrastructure, facilities, and improvements to our physical buildings where we are able to. Some of that was touched on. Security and safety is a second bucket and that was touched on during the presentation. Technology, updating the wi-fi capacity in our buildings throughout the district, making sure we have ample devices to distribute to our scholars, and use and wear and tear that will inevitably take place. The other one is having that money reach the classrooms directly, be it for remedial programs, making up for the loss of learning, and social/emotional learning. Those are all areas that I believe, to some extent, were touched on during the presentation. The one constructive criticism or warning that I would offer is that I noticed there was a lot of hiring taking place in this. That makes me raise an eyebrow because if we hire these folks now we have to be asking ourselves if these positions are sustainable next year. I want us to avoid us hiring these folks right now because the money is here and then we get to next year's budgeting process and we don't have the money to sustain those positions, and now we are letting people go. You know how this town is. "Paterson is RIF'g this. Paterson is letting people go." To the extent to which it's possible, I would really try to steer clear as best as we can from hiring these positions if they are not deemed sustainable at all. For us to get the amount of money that we are going to be getting, those four areas that I outlined are really where we need to put our focus. In this presentation it was broken down. The one thing that I caution is that we don't double down too hard on hiring positions that are not going to be sustainable. I don't think the money we're getting now should go to plug some of the holes that we've been facing for

many years. I still think there are a lot of tough decisions as it comes to budgeting and moving forward. Because we now have these dollars available to us, I still think we still need to make those tough decisions. These dollars will serve only as a temporary band-aid. When we get back to next year, how are we going to fill these spots now? How are we going to pay these positions? We'll end up cutting them and we're right back to start. I appreciate the presentation. It was thoughtful and inclusive of everyone and their thoughts. I think for the most part we're on the same page, but I would just caution us to be as careful as possible with hiring people if we can't keep them after one year because that's not a good practice.

Ms. Shafer: Let me just answer that, Manny. We looked at that as well. In order for us to address the learning loss we're going to need reading specialists. There's no doubt about it. Our next step is to look and see because the ESSER money is good until September 2023. We have no intentions of spending all of it this year. At a minimum, whatever it is we put in the ESSER money would be for a two-year period. In addition to that, we now have to go back and scrub our local budget and see what we can take out of it that is a one-time expense so that we can put these positions in. I understand the same thing. I don't want to add positions and then we're not going to be able to pay for them and we have to let people go. At the same time, I know there are specific needs in order for us to open up. Part of it is the facilities staff. If we don't have the people to do what we need to get done to make sure the buildings are safe, that's going to be a problem. If we don't have reading specialists and other folks to address the learning loss, then we're going to fall short there. We certainly take your suggestion under consideration because we do have to go back. That's why we had Column A and Column B. Clearly, I'd like to get 36 reading specialists, but maybe I'm only going to be able to get 18 and they have to be shared. We just got the state funding this morning. We have to go back and see what we can do that's going to be allowable with the ESSER money before we can make any decisions. Certainly, as we're making those decisions it's about exactly what you said.

Comm. Redmon: Ms. Shafer, you hit some of the key points. I think as a district overall we need to start adding to positions that we sustained this year. Quite often, we're looking at positions that we RIF'd. I know we didn't RIF this year because of COVID-19. We should be able to see in our budget what positions we can keep sustainable and making sure that we're having enough money to budget those positions in. I would rather you do that first before you add additional positions. If we can't sustain what we have, then what's the purpose of us hiring new people, which I understand Comm. Martinez spoke about? Also, with the reading specialists, have we also thought about contracting with other districts or other facilities? I know it's going to be a nationwide problem that students have a year of not being in the classroom. We might want to look at outside contractors or people volunteering their services to school districts instead of bringing on new staff members. We have to look at the overall picture of not just reading, but mathematics, especially second language ELA students and all of that stuff. We want to make sure that we look at the overall picture. Some places will volunteer their services because they know about the educational shortage and would be willing. We can also reach out to college students too for tutoring services or whatever. I would suggest that may be one way we can look at some stuff. I'm happy to see that we are looking at some of our infrastructure because for some time our infrastructure is the last that's on the list. I know for a couple of years we had even cut a lot of those positions in facilities because we did a restructuring. We know that we're quite understaffed there. I would like to see some of those positions not just brought back, but being effective. If they are brought back and not effective, then we're not doing anything. A lot of times we have not looked at the overall effectiveness of what's going on in all our departments. That's the only thing I would suggest at this point.

Comm. Arrington: I just want to echo what Comm. Redmon and the Vice President said. The hiring jumps out at me too. Hopefully, we can look at temp to perm or contracting. Like you said, Mr. Vice President, we won a lottery, but we want to be able to sustain all these positions overall. I'm very happy with the summer program. I want the summer program to be rigorous. I'm hoping that the program is built to address some of the learning losses that the children have been experiencing. Mr. Matthews, are there any lease options we can look at for the vehicle and ventilators? My concern is spending \$5 million on ventilators. Hopefully, god willing, three or four years from now, we're going to have \$5 million worth of ventilators sitting around and collecting dust. Mr. Matthews, I don't even know if that's an option. Probably not, but I just wanted to ask that question.

Mr. Matthews: I can answer that question. There are also studies regarding the benefits of health in your schools by having indoor air quality in a room where it's normally 90 degrees and now it's 75 degrees because you have better indoor air quality. Kids perform better and teachers are calling out sick less when they're in places with better indoor air quality. These are the educational benefits by having these devices in the schools that are long-term and sustainable.

Comm. Arrington: This is a long-term solution?

Mr. Matthews: Yes, this not just a COVID situation. This is really more for benefitting the staff and the students for healthier schools.

Comm. Arrington: Are these more for the older schools, like School No. 10 and School No. 6?

Mr. Matthews: This is for all the schools and classrooms.

Comm. Arrington: Will the electrical system in some of those older schools be able to support them? I remember we had that influx of air conditioners.

Mr. Matthews: They would not be able to handle the filters, but this gets around that. You don't have to worry about putting the wrong filters in the old system and burning out the system. This circumvents that situation. You can take an old school and pop these in every classroom and not impact the system. This is really a long-term solution for healthier schools and there are studies that show that teachers call out sick less. Kids perform better because the class is not too hot. You don't have to worry about opening the window and what's going to come into the classroom. It cuts down on infections by the kids. This is going to be with us forever. This is not just to get through COVID. This is truly a long-term solution for the schools.

Comm. Arrington: I was a little bit confused about the ALEKS cost. I thought we already paid for that now. What is the extra \$180,000 for?

Ms. Joanna Tsimpedes: That is a yearly subscription. It's a digital software program that you have to purchase annually. Unfortunately, there is no 'owning' the license permanently anymore. You have to fully purchase it, but we've gotten a good deal. We've cut that price in half from what they wanted originally. We haggled with the vendors because we won't pay what the original price is on anything and we go back and forth.

Comm. Arrington: But aren't we using it now?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Yes, and we are going to continue using it for next year because we are seeing that our students are making gains when we are looking at the data usage and the reports that we are getting from there. This is a continuation. One of the key things is to maintain sustainability with the programs we are using so that we can actually measure true growth from year to year rather than changing programs and never getting a full picture of what our students are doing. This is a continuing piece. We started it two years ago and we're continuing with it because we are seeing the evidence of it with our students' usage.

Comm. Arrington: Thank you. I'm trying to fill in for Dr. Hodges. Hopefully we will have a rigorous summer program.

Ms. Tsimpedes: With the summer program, we know our kids are not lacking only in academics. It's important that we bring extracurricular to our students in the summers. We want to change the way the program has been done in the past because we don't want to penalize kids for something that they really couldn't control nor could us with the pandemic. In putting together our program, we are looking at what our students need in order to move on to the next grade level. We want to incorporate physical education because our kids have been home since March. We need to get our kids active. We need to continue with social/emotional and mental wellness. That's key. Especially as we see our numbers slowly dwindling, we're looking at possibly reopening in the future. We need to make sure we are preparing our kids to come back into the school year, especially our lower grades. If you think about our preschool and our kindergarten, they've never stepped foot in a building. Our program this summer is going to be very different from what we've done in the past. It's going to be continuous because what we do in a summer program we want to see the follow-through in the after-school program and the Saturday academy that we are proposing to have. It's going to be a follow-through piece.

Comm. Arrington: Thank you. The Chromebooks, is that for breakage, for replacing, or for new devices?

Mr. Matthews: It's a combination of breakage and wear and tear. Remember we did a three-year plan three years ago for \$1.1 million a year and a lot of those devices are now outdated. We are replenishing devices from three years ago. We now have to turn them over and replace the old inventory.

Comm. Arrington: The new devices are under warranty.

Mr. Matthews: We started in the high school three years ago and those devices have to all be replaced now for next year. They are three years old this year.

Comm. Arrington: Mr. Matthews, the one-to-one and the substitutes when teachers call out, I thought we had some discussions on when a teacher calls out. With the one-to-one devices now, that class can be split up. The kids have their Chromebooks with the work on it. Is there really still a need to have a substitute staff that class? I thought we were talking about that a year ago.

Ms. Shafer: We did. We were talking about it. The problem now is social distancing. You're not going to be able to add more students to the class. If we didn't have the pandemic, then we can split up the classes because they have their device. Right now, we can't put any more students in the class.

Comm. Arrington: Got it. The isolation room, we're checking the kids off the bus. We're checking the kids as they come into the school. But we're still theorizing that we might have kids become ill during the day and that's why we need this isolation room.

Ms. Shafer: According to the CDC guidelines, you have to have an isolation room in every building. You can have a staff member and you want to keep them isolated until they can either drive themselves home or somebody can pick them up. It's the same thing with the kids. Kids can come in with no temperature. People have COVID with no temperature but later get other symptoms. We want to keep them isolated and we are following the CDC guidelines.

Comm. Arrington: Thank you, Mr. President and Vice President.

Comm. Simmons: I have a question with regards to the isolation room. I'm assuming if a student gets sick during the day, does this automatically mean every student will go into the isolation room? In the past, if a student got sick during the day, they would probably go to the nurse's office and wait for a parent to pick them up. Will this now mean that every student no matter what the illness is?

Ms. Shafer: No. If you have a COVID symptom, whether you are a student or an adult, you'll go into the isolation room. Let's say you fall outside and scrape your leg and it's bleeding. You'll go right to the nurse. The nurse will take care of that and then you'll go back to the classroom. If you have a COVID symptom and you're in a class, you'll go to the isolation room and then from there you'll go home. Until we get a positive test, the other students in the class are not affected because of social distancing, wearing masks, and having a partition on their desk.

Comm. Simmons: The floating substitutes, I know we had this discussion last year because of social distancing. Especially for teachers, let's say a teacher doesn't call out and that substitute isn't needed. Are we just stuck with the cost?

Ms. Shafer: I think when we open during the first week or 10 days there's going to be all types of different issues going on. I think the substitutes will be needed to get kids lined up. Kids have to learn a new set of rules like social distancing, how to walk in the hallway, wear a mask, only two in the bathroom at a time, and things like that. I think we'll need them. I think after the first two weeks and everyone settles in and is a little more comfortable, I don't think we are going to need two every day in every building. I think that will probably go down to one and it will probably get to a point where we won't have floaters at all but we will have the one assigned to the isolation room. I think we have to get through the first couple of weeks.

Comm. Simmons: In terms of facilities, I guess this is a question for the BA and Mr. Mapp. Construction on Hinchcliffe is coming up and we use a portion of that space for storage. I know we had talked about a building around the School No. 26 area somewhere near or behind. Is there a way to move things around so that we can build that space sooner rather than later? If they start construction on Hinchcliffe, now we are scrambling to find a space.

Mr. Neil Mapp: We're looking at using School No. 14 as a temporary swing space for our landscaping and snow removal equipment. We are now looking to fortify the site, put up fencing that would protect our equipment, and use storage containers to store some of the equipment until a more permanent site is developed.

Comm. Simmons: That's exactly what I'm talking about, the permanent site. Because of what we are getting, is there a way to make that happen?

Mr. Mapp: We have some preliminary site plans. We were looking at the back of School No. 1 where we used to have TCUs to develop that site and to place a Butler building on that site. We have preliminary drawings and preliminary cost estimates for construction and development of that site. We'll just have to look for financing options to do that.

Mr. Matthews: I'll jump in really quick to support what Neil is saying. One of the things with the ESSER II, even though the final guidance isn't out, there were three key additions to the funding and one of the things was school facility repairs, upgrades, and improvements. This might fall under that category of school improvement under facilities and repairs that we can look at as an opportunity to maybe do this under the grant. That's one of the three differences between ESSER I and ESSER II. We can look at having that paid for through the grant. As Ms. Shafer said, the grant expires in 2023. I'm looking at one of the three differences and this is something that we can cover under the grant.

Comm. Simmons: I just wouldn't want us to be scrambling for somewhere to put our equipment, especially since we have more than the city. I hope they're not listening.

Mr. Mapp: They already know it because they borrow ours. It's okay.

Comm. Simmons: I just want to make sure we are covered there.

Comm. D. Martinez: I like everything that was proposed. I do agree with the other Commissioners about the sustainability and the hiring. I feel uncomfortable about the amount of substitutes that are being hired. I do see your point, Superintendent, but I just feel like it's too much. I see there are two different budget amounts for substitutes that are going to be providing coverage and then a different amount for substitutes that are providing coverage for the isolation rooms. If we are hiring two substitutes for coverage, can one of those substitutes be used or alternate for the isolation room?

Ms. Shafer: Absolutely. What I said earlier is that I do anticipate the first couple of weeks – because people have not been in in a year and there is a lot of apprehension – we are going to need some help getting students through the body scanners for temperatures, having them do the health assessment, lining up appropriately with social distancing, and bathroom coverage because there's only two at a time. Until everybody gets comfortable with it, I think for the first couple of weeks we will need the two. I think at that point though, it will go down to one or we won't have any floaters at all and we'll only have the one for the isolation room. We wanted to put it in and show you everything. That's the maximum, but there's a good portion of it that can be less.

Comm. D. Martinez: I know you wanted to provide mental health for staff and students. One of the things I want to recognize and suggest is the need for SACs. In our last meeting, we had that beautiful presentation with the SACs and HIBs. It's very important to have them because I believe we only have nine in the district. We have 54 schools. I know you are not going to need a SAC for complete elementary and preschool, but we have a lot of high school and middle school students where seven or nine SACs are not enough. We can consider maybe hiring a few more to be able to fill that need because it's very important. That's all.

Comm. Teague: My question is concerning the substitutes as well. A parent reached out to me not long ago and told me there was a substitute that was assigned to her child in terms of special education, like the pullout services. I'm trying to figure out if we have substitute teachers that are also certified and able to teach special needs students. If we are using those teachers and those substitutes, are they trained and licensed to be able to do that? That's a major issue. I think it was at School No. 18, if I'm not mistaken.

Ms. Shafer: We are using substitutes to be some of our personal aides. There are also aides in the classroom. I'm going to ask Cheryl Coy to address that.

Ms. Cheryl Coy: Substitutes are certified to be a covering teacher. There are no requirements that say it has to be a SPED background, language background, or math. A substitute just has to have a certain number of credits in order to apply to be a substitute. There is no specific specialized area that any substitute has to be in coming into any district to support.

Comm. Teague: That's pretty much all I had. Thank you.

Comm. Simmons: No one has any other questions?

Comm. Redmon: This is a working document.

Comm. Simmons: I just want to be sure.

Ms. Shafer: We did hear some things that I want to go back and look at based on the comments from the Board. We're also going to go back in, like we said, and look at the positions. I do think that some are more important than others, like the transition plan for our super seniors at STARS Academy. That transition program, the reading specialist, and certainly the staff in facilities. We'll go back. We need to first get the guidance around the ESSER II money as to what we can use it for. Then we can take from our local budget so that it's a one-time expense that we can use ESSER for and then be able to put the salaries in there because we do want to be able to sustain it. COVID isn't going to go away by June. We're still going to be addressing a learning loss for a while. I want to make sure that the students profit from this additional money as well. We'll go back and look at everything that you suggested and more specifically the positions.

Comm. Simmons: The transition program with the super seniors, is that going to be in STARS Academy? How is that going to work?

Ms. Coy: The goal is to expand that program into the proposed Don Bosco. We would create what the out-of-district programs currently have, true transition programs that have career readiness, that teach students life skill independence, and really maximizes what we're doing outside of what we currently have. Their CBI programs would also be expanded. The goal is to increase that capacity in-district so that we can sustain our students remaining in-district. A lot of parents want out-of-district because these programs are offered in out-of-district. By us creating them in-district, it allows our students to grow within their own space in Paterson in the transition program instead of out-of-district.

Comm. Simmons: By Don Bosco, you mean the current...?

Ms. Coy: The current DBA by Route 20.

Ms. Shafer: One thing Cheryl left out. The problem she's having is that because of the super seniors, she doesn't have room for students coming out of eighth grade that need the STARS program. How many super seniors do we have going into next year?

Ms. Coy: Right now, we have 42 super seniors who are in either their second or third year. They are entitled to be there. Then we have 17 eighth graders who are moving up to freshman year who need to be in a STARS program. For those 17 there's no space. For us to expand and build a transition program that will allow the super seniors to be housed in another location, that would open up space in STARS for the freshmen coming in. It would give them a more viable program in-district as opposed to out-of-district. For out-of-district, we pay anywhere from \$80,000 to \$90,000 per student and sometimes that may or may not include transportation.

Comm. Teague: \$80,000 to \$90,000?

Ms. Coy: Yes.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: Mr. President, this is a conversation that we've had for a while now. I know Ms. Coy has been pushing it for a long time so I think this is a great opportunity. It's a huge need right now, not necessarily the money, just keeping students in-house and allowing them more opportunity to learn other things. I know Ms. Coy and Ms. Tsimpedes at some point, even though the pandemic got in the way, were talking about additional college programs as well and how that can be expanded. I think this is a dire need right now.

Comm. Simmons: I know in September the goal is to go back to probably a hybrid model. There are probably going to be parents who don't want their children to come back at all and they're probably going to be employees that shouldn't go back. Have we thought about a truly virtual program that has its own staff, if you can identify enough staff members that probably shouldn't be in the buildings or that you would okay to work from home and place them into that model so we can identify students and staff? It would probably be a school that has its own administration. Have we thought about anything like that?

Ms. Shafer: Joanna, if you want to add to this. We were going to have the students whose parents want them to stay remote for the classroom teacher to be teaching them as well as the students that are in front of them. We can certainly look at doing a virtual program with any staff members who are going to remain remote for medical reasons. Joanna, do you want to add to that?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Sure. Whenever we go back, whether it's at the end of this year or next year, we are going to be returning to a hybrid model. This means that we are going to have students who will be remote on specific days because of the social distancing guidelines and ensuring that we are doing what we need until we have herd immunity with the vaccine. What we were anticipating is that we do envision having a Cohort C in the fall. There will probably be parents who will not be comfortable sending their kids into buildings and we can completely understand that. They will be doing what we would have done this year where they would be following the teacher but they would be remote. The teacher still has to instruct the students who are on the cohort at home while instructing the students in class. When you are looking at creating a program like that, you have to look at the state guidelines to say are you creating a new school. It's been talked about at the state level on various occasions regarding creating a virtual academy, per se. That means you are creating a school code. It's another

school you're adding to the district. You can't make it its own program. Those were the last guidelines we had read. If things have changed, perhaps, but with regards to remote we're still going to have some form of remote learning next year because of the hybrid model. Until we are all fully into a five-day schedule, our students who are going to be in Cohort C for the fall or even in the spring this year would be following the homeroom that they would be in had they been in the building.

Comm. Arrington: Based on what you were just saying, will the bedside students be part of that Cohort C? We saw the benefit this year with the bedside students getting to socialize with their classmates. Are we going to continue that?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Yes. We've seen that it is working and you are absolutely right. That socialization where they are intermingling with their peers rather than having that isolation, I definitely do see it as a gain for us. If we had to do bedside for whatever reason, it would have to be on a case-by-case. Ms. Coy, do you want to add to that?

Ms. Coy: You're absolutely right. It is on a case-by-case basis. We do have some students that are extremely medically fragile that would not really be able to engage in a virtual platform with their peers. We also had a student who was medically fragile who was able to engage with her peers. Had she not been virtual, she would have never had that experience of social interaction with her peers.

Comm. Arrington: It seems like it's one of the good things we've learned from this pandemic. Did we look at lease options for the vehicles? I know I had said the ventilators. I don't know if I had ever clarified for the vehicles also versus purchasing. Was that something we considered?

Mr. Matthews: The price tag was for leasing.

Comm. Arrington: The numbers weren't purchasing? Awesome! Obviously, whatever one is the better of the two.

Mr. Matthews: We do a lease versus buy analysis. We typically tend to do better with a lease. The ones that we have now are leased.

Comm. Arrington: Thank you, Mr. President.

Comm. Simmons: I just have a question for Ms. Tsimpedes as well. With the Cohort C and the teacher teaching simultaneously to students in class and students at home, what would that look like? Do we have enough devices? Are we going to make some investments in technology to make sure?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Absolutely, Mr. President. One of the things with the money that was in partnership with the City Council, we have started outfitting the buildings with the 400 Promethean boards that we received. That is going to help with having that instruction both in-person and hybrid while the teacher is in there. The other piece is that we did invest in technology also for the teachers, webcams for the classrooms with the built-in microphones, and Chromebooks for the teachers as well so they are not stuck to a desktop. They can be around with the Chromebook in their hand if they have to. The Promethean board is an excellent investment when it comes to helping with remote instruction. We are looking at how we are going to outfit the remainder of the classrooms so that we are ready to go. We have looked into what that would look like when we do return with having kids in front of a device and in the classroom. I think in the beginning you may have some kinks to iron out as teachers get comfortable using

the Promethean board. It is new and in some cases they might have been using Eno board or a smartboard. Having used the Promethean board myself, it is so much easier and it really captures everything you are doing. The class can pay attention and the kids who are remote can also focus on what's happening in the lesson.

Comm. Simmons: With the Promethean boards, will we have training for teachers prior to?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Yes. Technology is something that is not going away. We've been very fortunate that we have been providing steady professional development to our teachers starting from last year. This year has been truly intense and that is going to continue even next year. It is a priority as new things come out in technology to assist us with remote learning as well as enhance our instruction in the classroom. We are going to continue to ensure that our teachers have what they need in order to be successful.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: Just a question with the students coming back. Are they going to keep the same teachers? Is this something that we are looking into? I don't know if that was mentioned at the beginning.

Ms. Tsimpedes: We did not change anybody's schedule because you do want to have that consistency when the kids come back. Let's say we come back May 1. Those kids would have the teachers they were seeing every day and have interacted with since September 1, unless a teacher has resigned, took a leave, or something like that. We want our children to continue learning with the teacher they have started with at the beginning of the year. It would be good for our kids to have that personal interaction where they are seeing the teacher in front of them versus in a little picture on a computer screen.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: Would that consistency go into September as well?

Ms. Tsimpedes: The grade level would change, so it would change the teacher.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: That's what the question is. I know there are some of our students who have the same teachers for two or three - I'm forgetting the term.

Ms. Tsimpedes: Looping.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: Thank you. I'm not sure all students, but is there a number of our students that we can see that happen with in September? Now that teacher is used to that person in a virtual learning space, can better assess how they are doing physically, or they would be better virtual and how to come up with different techniques to help them.

Ms. Tsimpedes: One of the problems is certification. You have to be certified in specific content areas, especially when you're going from the K-5 into the middle school world and so forth. You also have to remember that teachers know their craft when it comes to the content they teach. Moving them in the time of uncertainty as we have right now may not be the best option for teachers. We do have looping. There are some schools that do loop, but it does not happen consistently across the district because you may have a phenomenal kindergarten teacher who really knows her craft and knows the level of engagement for kids and you want almost every child who goes through kindergarten to have that teacher. That's one of the things we look at, but in terms of looping as a whole across the district, it's not really a feasible option at this

point. You have to retrain almost every teacher not just in one content area, but in multiple content areas. I'm going to be honest. This has been a challenge for the teachers as it has been for students learning to work remotely and then coming back to the new norm as we go back into our routine at the hybrid.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: That makes sense. I was considering it more for the younger grades, but you are right. There are some teachers who are rock stars and it wouldn't necessarily be difficult for them, but it will be a change. From first grade to third grade, it would be nice for those who could loop and for whom it's working. It would be another option for them as well.

Comm. Teague: This question is along the lines of finance. In terms of the eighth grade students from last year and the high school seniors, was there any money that they put for the trips or the prom? Was any of that money due to be refunded to any of the parents? I know I paid a lot of dues for my daughter and I haven't seen anything yet. I'm just trying in general to see if there were ever any talks about refunding those parents if they requested it? Some were asking about it.

Mr. Matthews: When we went through the budget for the third or fourth time after we got the reduction, one of the things that we took out of the budget when we were in this COVID environment was field trips. There were not a lot of field trips to be scheduled. I haven't heard anybody reach out to me regarding reimbursement for field trips because we took that out of the budget once we were in this environment.

Comm. Teague: Prior to that during the graduation. You're saying even in that time? There was a period of time where they were collecting for the upcoming trips. They did it for my daughter. Even the trips that didn't take place, they were collecting dues ahead of time to make sure everybody's money was in before the trip took place and the trip didn't take place. That's what I'm talking about. I did it for my daughter, that's why I'm wondering.

Mr. Matthews: We haven't had any requests for refunds for field trips from any vendors or schools.

Ms. Sandra Diodonet: Mr. Teague, I can check with Don Bosco to see what the story is with those funds.

Comm. Teague: Alright.

Comm. Simmons: Does anybody have any other questions?

Comm. Arrington: I just want to thank Mr. Matthews and the district for the presentation.

Comm. M. Martinez: I think everybody is satisfied. As everyone mentioned, this is a working document. We'll continue to dialog and make suggestions as we make progress as well. If there are no other causes or needs for concern right now, Mr. President, let's call it.

Comm. Simmons: Madam Superintendent, I know you are going to go back and look at some of the other suggestions. When can we expect some feedback on those suggestions?

Mr. Matthews: Ms. Shafer, can I help with that answer? We have a meeting on Monday as a collective body of department heads going through the preliminary

guidance. That meeting is going to take place on Monday. We are then meeting with Mr. Schoop to go through further clarification and guidance in terms of training by everybody who's going to touch this money. That meeting is going to be on Friday, March 5. We have the workshop on the 9th. That's what we have in place to go through it. We have a meeting on March 4. We have an additional training for everybody who is going to touch the federal money on March 5. Eileen, based on that you can make a recommendation based on what you know we're going to do as far as getting together.

Ms. Shafer: I think we can come back to you on Monday, March 8. We are going to look at it on Monday. We are going to scrub the budget and see what can come out of local and what can go into ESSER looking at these salaries as well. Then we're going to get further clarification on the 5th. We should be in good shape by the 8th to come back. Does that work for you, Leon?

Mr. Matthews: Yes. On that day we can have the gap review, where we are with the budget, and an update on everything that we have in it right now. Then we can have the Commissioners vet it and direct us on how they want to move forward. Does that sound pretty good?

Comm. Simmons: That's March 8?

Mr. Matthews: Yes.

Ms. Shafer: Does 5:30 work?

Comm. Simmons: Works for me.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: I don't know if it was talked about or mentioned. Financially for this year, have we allotted or looked into what it might cost us if we would have to bring students back in for testing?

Comm. Simmons: From the last meeting, they were working on a plan for what that would look like. I think it was supposed to be presented at the workshop.

Ms. Shafer: Yes.

Ms. Tsimpedes: We all heard the announcement from the Governor last Friday. President Biden said that they want testing to go on. However, he's allowing for states to make decisions based on if they want to delay the test, shorten the test, or look at what they have. We don't have any guidance right now from the NJDOE with what to do with testing because the President has not put out anything formal. We are waiting for the Secretary of Education to be confirmed and we don't have that information. Actually, today the state was asking for some internal data and I'm wondering if that's maybe a prelude that if you've done internal assessments that may help you out in the long run. We're trying to figure out why they are asking for mid-year assessments at the state level. Commissioner, we don't have anything because they have not told us dates. We were told to hold off. At the last broadcast that came out at the beginning of February, we were told that if anything were to happen it wouldn't start until after April 5. There's no training. It's the blind leading the blind right now to identify what that would look like for in-person testing.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: I wish I could say don't worry and guidance is coming. My experience this entire year has been it probably won't get here. They'll tell you as it's going along and the dates that they provide you would probably be the week after the

day they told you. I guess at this point it's just coming up with something that we can work off of knowing that it would be in draft, especially if we are talking about financially what that might look like for us. Granted, I know it's difficult and I wish he would have just waived it and kept it moving. With this back and forth, we have to put something together knowing that it's probably going to change.

Comm. Simmons: Unfortunately, I don't anticipate just listening to some of the answers during the confirmation that it's going to be waived.

Ms. Tsimpedes: I don't think that it will be waived either, Commissioner. I do think there is going to be some type of flexibility given to the state. I think that's why the NJDOE is asking for specific data points that we have in-house.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: Let's hope so.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Comm. Teague, seconded by Comm. Castillo-Cruz that the meeting be adjourned. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.