

COLTS NECK TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS
COLTS NECK, NEW JERSEY 07722

Mission Statement

The mission of Colts Neck Township Schools is to empower and inspire students to be confident, creative, self-sufficient learners who maximize their strengths and talents and contribute as responsible participants in their ever expanding world.

MINUTES: For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Board of Education, **March 5, 2025**, at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Administration Building at 70 Conover Road, Colts Neck, New Jersey 07722

Public Participation

The Board of Education recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest. Public participation is governed under District Policy 0167 - Public Participation in Board Meetings as follows:

Public participation shall be governed by the following rules:

1. *A participant must be recognized by the presiding officer and must preface comments by an announcement of his/her name, municipality of residence, and group affiliation, if applicable;*
2. *Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes' duration;*
3. *No participant may speak more than once on the same topic until all others who wish to speak on that topic have been heard; and only then if time constraints and/or the presiding officer allow.*
4. *All statements, questions, or inquiries shall be directed to the presiding officer; and any questions or inquiries directed by a participant to another Board member or Superintendent shall be redirected to the presiding officer who shall determine if such statement, question, or inquiry shall be addressed by the presiding officer on behalf of the Board or by the individual Board member or Superintendent;*
5. *It is the expectation of the Board that communications between participants and the Board will remain positive and focused around the best interest of the student(s) and the district as a whole. All communications from all stakeholders shall be conducted with mutual respect and civility. The Board will not condone communications and interactions that can be perceived as harassing, insulting, threatening, or lacking in respect or civility.*

The presiding officer may:

- a. *Interrupt, warn, and/or terminate a participant's statement, question, or inquiry when it is too lengthy;*
- b. *Interrupt and/or warn a participant when the statement, question, or inquiry is abusive, obscene, or may be defamatory;*
- c. *Request any person to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum;*
- d. *Request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person prevents or disrupts a meeting with an act that obstructs or interferes with a meeting;*
- e. *Call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting; and*
- f. *Waive these rules when necessary for the protection of privacy or to maintain an orderly operation of the Board meeting.*

CALL TO ORDER

President Volpe called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Phyllis Camera, Sara Horowitz (remote), Jason Orrico, Vincent Rugnetta, Robert Scales, Brian Scarpa, Angelique Volpe and Kevin Walsh

Board Members Absent; Jessica Ramirez

LEGAL NOTICE OF MEETING

Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, this meeting has been duly advertised in the Asbury Park Press in a schedule of meetings dated January 16, 2025 notice of which has been filed with the Deputy Clerk for Colts Neck Township and the requirements of posting of notices have been met.

FLAG SALUTE

President Volpe led the Flag Salute.

COMMENTS FROM ATTENDING CONSTITUENTS - ALL SUBJECTS

None

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT ON INVESTIGATIONS OF HIB INCIDENTS

BE IT RESOLVED that the Colts Neck Board of Education hereby accepts the Superintendent’s report on investigations of incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying (“HIB”) occurring during the following period:

Period	Number of Investigations Reported	Number of Incidents HIB Was Found to Occur
2/16/25 - 2/28/25	1	0

ACTION ITEMS FOR APPROVAL:

1. AFFIRMATION OF SUPERINTENDENT’S ACTION

BE IT RESOLVED that the Colts Neck Board of Education approves the acceptance of no Superintendent’s Action for HIB/Non-HIB investigations, as reported at its meeting of February 19, 2025, for the period commencing February 1, 2025 through February 15, 2025 wherein no incidents were reported.

2. **2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR OUT-OF-DISTRICT PLACEMENTS**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Colts Neck Board of Education approves the out-of district placements for the balance of the 2024-25 school year, as indicated below:

Student	School	Effective Date	Tuition	Extraordinary Costs
20311733	CPC High Point School	March 3, 2025*	\$43,692.48	N/A
20301495	Hawkswood School	March 10, 2025*	\$26,114.76	\$14,427.00

*Students placements at previous out-of district schools terminated effective as of February 28, 2025 and March 7, 2025, respectively.

3. **BOARD SECRETARY’S REPORT**

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-16.10(c)4, we certify that as of December 31, 2024 the Board Secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) did not reflect an over expenditure in any of the major accounts or funds, and based on the appropriation balances reflected on this report and the advice of district officials, we have no reason to doubt that the district has sufficient funds available to meet its financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Colts Neck Township Board of Education approves the Board Secretary’s Report as of December 31, 2024. ([Attachment # F-1](#))

4. **TREASURER’S REPORT**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Colts Neck Township Board of Education approves the Treasurer of School Monies Report as of December 31, 2024. ([Attachment # F-2](#))

5. **COMPREHENSIVE 3 & 4 YR. OLD PRESCHOOL PROGRAM FOR 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Colts Neck Township Board of Education approves the offering of the 2025-2026 full-day Comprehensive Preschool Program for eligible children ages 3 and 4, with tuition rates as indicated below:

2025-2026 Preschool Program	
Five (5) days per week – 9:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.	\$8,300

6. **TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Colts Neck Board of Education approves the termination of Dawn Van Brunt, Instructional Assistant at Conover Road Primary School, effective February 24, 2025.

7. TITLE IX FAIRNESS IN WOMEN'S SPORTS - BOARD RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED that the Colts Neck Board of Education approves the following resolution:

COLTS NECK BOARD OF EDUCATION URGES THE STATE OF NJ AND THE NJSIAA TO AFFIRM COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL EXECUTIVE ORDERS REGARDING FAIRNESS IN WOMEN'S SPORTS.

WHEREAS, the Colts Neck Board of Education is committed to ensuring fairness, safety, and equal opportunities in athletics for all students; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of women's sports and protecting the competitive balance in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and

WHEREAS, President Donald J. Trump has issued Executive Orders and policy directives aimed at preventing biological males from competing in women's sports, reinforcing the principle that female athletes should have a fair playing field; and

WHEREAS, the Board acknowledges that executive orders must be codified into law and stands ready to enact newly drafted policies that implement these directives in full compliance with federal law; and

WHEREAS, the Board is mindful of its fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of Colts Neck, and recognizes that Governor Phil Murphy has a record of vexatious litigation in our courts, which has resulted in the blatant waste of state tax dollars, and furthermore stated his unwillingness to comply with federal law; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to uphold the financial integrity of this district and avoid unnecessary legal expenditures, the Board will implement these policies upon confirmation that the State of New Jersey is in compliance with federal law; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Colts Neck Board of Education will formally adopt policies in accordance with the executive orders issued under the Trump administration regarding fairness in women's sports, standing prepared to implement them once the state meets its legal obligations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board reminds Governor Phil Murphy and the NJSIAA that they are not above federal law and strongly encourages the administrations to comply with these legal mandates to avoid unnecessary financial and legal burdens on taxpayers and school districts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the board believes allowing biological males to compete in girls' sports may disadvantage biological female students by hindering their ability to achieve their athletic goals, which could, in turn, impact their academic progress and discourage their continued participation in sports; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board affirms its commitment to protecting opportunities for female student-athletes and ensuring compliance with federal and state law while upholding the values of fairness and competitive integrity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Township Committee of Colts Neck, our state and county legislative representatives, Governor Phil Murphy, the NJ Commissioner of Education, the NJSIAA, the office of the President of the United States, and other relevant stakeholders. Adopted this 5th day of March 2025, by the Colts Neck Board of Education.

DISCUSSION:

Vincent Rugnetta thanked Mr. Scales for drafting a concise resolution, and for allowing the Board members to add their critiques and ideas as well.

Mr. Scarpa commented that Mr. Scales did an excellent job in communicating this out to the full Board and provided the opportunity for feedback. Feedback was received and implemented, and serves as a good example of a cohesive working environment that has set the standard for this Board and future Boards to come.

Mr. Walsh thanked President Trump for issuing this Executive Order.

ROLL CALL VOTE

ACTION ITEMS	
MOVED BY	Angelique Volpe
SECONDED BY	Vincent Rugnetta
YES	Phyllis Camera, Sara Horowitz (remote), Jason Orrico, Vincent Rugnetta, Robert Scales, Brian Scarpa, Angelique Volpe and Kevin Walsh
NO	None
ABSENT	Jessica Ramirez

COMMUNICATIONS

Date	From	To	Subject
2/14/25	Alison DeNoia	Board of Education	Support for CDMS student cell phone classroom storage program

BOARD LIAISONS REPORTS

Parent Advisory Committee - Sara Horowitz

- The meetings are set for February 25th at 7pm and February 26th at 10am; emails were sent out by Dr. Garibay.

Colts Neck PTO - Sara Horowitz

- The Gala is March 27th; RSVPs are due on Monday.
- Read-A-Thon is still going on until Friday; the results from earlier today were 164,000 minutes read and \$43,000 raised.
- Book Swap was held today; 1200 books donated to CRES; 2000 books to CRPS and the remaining 700 books will be donated to the Colts Neck Library.
- Spiritwear is available; there is new attire.
- The PTO general meeting is scheduled for March 12th at 6pm at the Administration Building; this is a great opportunity to hear about all of the upcoming events.

- Mrs. Volpe reported that Mr. Alan Ryan, a member of the community, made a generous donation of encyclopedias to add to our district's library; she thanked Mr. Ryan for keeping the students at the forefront of his intentions.

Colts Neck Township Schools Newsletter - Phyllis Camera

- The first Newsletter went out on February 25th; the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Thanked everyone who took the time to read and share thoughts. Looking forward to growing this initiative and expanding the reach of the newsletter to more residents. Additionally, to help keep everyone informed the committee is thinking about creating a signup link with the assistance of Mr. Capasso, where community members can opt- in for updates.
- In an effort to continue improving communications, she will be taking a Professional Development Day in mid March focused on Canva and Smore; these tools will enhance the committee's work professionally, but will also help strengthen the Board's outreach efforts.
- The next edition of the Newsletter will be featuring Vincent Rugnetta as the next Board Member in the spotlight.

Colts Neck Township Schools Arts, Sports, & Extracurricular Activities - Vincent Rugnetta

- T-ball registration is closed; those still wishing to sign up please reach out to the Colts Neck Sports Foundation directly. Season starts April 5th.
- The Flag football season has started.
- The CDMS Spring Musical will be March 21st at 7pm and March 22nd at 2pm; and the Conover Road Elementary School Band and Choir concerts will be April 1st.

Colts Neck Township Committee - Brian Scarpa/Phyllis Camera

- The Township Committee's public comment policy has been revised to allow immediate responses to residents' concerns.
- Mayor Buss declared March as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Michelle Bautista was recognized for her advocacy, receiving certificates from the Township Committee and Assemblywoman Margie Donlan. The designated day to wear blue is the first Friday of March known as "Dress in Blue Day" which falls on Friday, March 7th, and the community is encouraged to participate.
- Affordable Housing Hearing is scheduled for Friday, March 7th, at 9 AM at the Monmouth County Courthouse; the town is objecting to parts of the agreement.
- During the public comment section, she Introduced the first issue of the newsletter. Copies were distributed to the committee and public, with thanks to Dr. Garibay for printing hard copies.

Colts Neck Township Senior Citizens - Kevin Walsh

- Excited that the newsletter was sent to the senior citizens.
- Seniors are invited to attend a dress rehearsal of Matilda Jr. on March 20th at 1 PM, with opening night on March 21st.
- A property tax relief program for seniors was brought to his attention by Board Member Brian Scarpa and Dr. Garibay. It reimburses up to half of property taxes, with a cap of \$6,500 per eligible applicant. Helps freeze property taxes starting next year, providing significant financial relief. Mr. Walsh encourages seniors to take advantage of the program, calling it a rare, effective initiative in New Jersey.

Naval Weapons Station Earle - Brian Scarpa/Jessica Ramirez

- Mr. Scarpa and Mrs. Ramirez discussed future collaborations with the Naval Weapons Station. They are working on an invitation to meet with NWSE representatives to understand their current needs and future plans.
- They want to extend the newsletter platform to Naval Weapons Station students. The goal is to

highlight one or two students if they are interested.

- More updates are expected, with Mrs. Ramirez to provide additional details at the next meeting.

State & County School Boards Association Representative - Angelique Volpe

- Reminder to all Board members to complete their Financial Disclosure Forms as well as their mandated training.
- The Annual School Board Workshop is scheduled for October 20-23, 2025, at the Atlantic City Convention Center. Please reach out to the Business Office if you wish to attend. There is a group rate which allows for 25 participants.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORK SESSION

AD-HOC AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Scales noted that Dr. Garibay was able to provide him with a listing of how many non-public students Colts Neck has. He offered the floor to Dr. Garibay to explain more how she obtained the information.

Dr. Garibay presented data on the number of non-public school students in the community. This data was crucial as it plays a significant role in transportation planning. As per New Jersey law, parents of non-public school students can either receive aid-in-lieu payments or transportation services. The data collection process involves the Freehold Regional High School District, which gathers forms from non-public schools. These forms are processed to provide accurate counts. While the count might not be 100% comprehensive, it is reliable for state reporting, Title I funding calculations, ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) applications, and outreach efforts.

Mr. Scales emphasized that he will refine estimates of non-public school student numbers further. This effort includes creating an updated version of his previously developed one-page document. The goal is to gain a clearer understanding of the ratio of non-public to public school students. Current assumptions estimate that 100% of students in specific units attend public schools, but these assumptions will be adjusted as more precise data becomes available.

Mr. Scales noted the data included in the current fact sheet was gathered from sources like NJ.com, Forbes, and government agencies. This information helped improve algorithms used to estimate tax revenue and support planning.

Another point of discussion will be the potential reconfiguration of grade levels within schools. For example, exploring whether middle school grades (6-8) could expand to include lower grades (e.g., 4-8 or 5-8), as seen in other towns. These considerations aim to optimize space usage and adapt to changing student populations.

Chris Puglisi from the Affordable Housing Alliance reached out to Mr. Scales to discuss affordable housing development. He offered to present to the Board, providing insights into the development process and strategies for managing affordable housing. The goal is to educate the Board and the community while maintaining a balance between introducing affordable housing and avoiding overdevelopment. The topic of affordable housing has generated interest and engagement within the community.

Mr. Scales discussed the need to decide where to make these evolving documents publicly accessible for feedback. Not all community members use platforms like Facebook, so alternative solutions were considered. Ongoing updates to the data and information from constituents will continuously refine planning and decision-making.

ADVOCACY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

1. Federal laws related to Title IX and DEI and State funding

Mrs. Volpe reported that on February 25th, Governor Murphy announced record-high funding for K-12 districts in his budget address. However, Colts Neck faced a significant setback, with a \$179,000 reduction in state aid or 4.9%, one of the largest in New Jersey. Mrs. Volpe expressed disappointment and suggested that Colts Neck, being a conservative town, might be unfairly targeted. She emphasized that this was her personal opinion.

Mrs. Volpe noted the lack of response from county officials and Senator Vin Gopal regarding strategies to address these funding cuts. She reached out to Dr. Garibay to discuss inviting Senator Gopal to a closed meeting to address these pressing issues. The agenda for this meeting would include:

- The state funding cut and its implications for the district.
- The recent executive order by President Trump banning men from women's sports and recognizing only two genders. Mrs. Volpe stressed the district's commitment to upholding this order to protect federal funding and safeguard women and girls' rights in education.
- Governor Murphy's proposal to ban cell phones in K-12 schools, which Mrs. Volpe opposes, advocating instead for parental rights regarding cell phone usage.
- President Trump's executive order ending DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives in federal agencies, which Mrs. Volpe supports.

Mrs. Volpe also highlighted the uncertainty around scheduling the meeting with Senator Gopal but assured that she would report back on his plans to advocate for Colts Neck School District.

Mr. Scales emphasized the importance of residents understanding the reduction in state funding and the mechanisms behind it. He explained that these reductions are not based on common sense but rather on algorithms, specifically referred to as the "Robin Hood algorithm." This algorithm is triggered when local tax revenues, such as those in Colts Neck, increase significantly. The algorithm assumes that higher local revenues mean the town requires less state funding, leading to cuts. From a practical perspective, Mr. Scales highlighted the challenges this creates. Colts Neck is already dealing with mandates from the Affordable Housing Subcommittee, which will lead to an influx of infrastructure and students. He argued that it is counterproductive for the administration to mandate affordable housing while simultaneously reducing state funding, as this places additional financial strain on the town.

He stressed that if the State requires Colts Neck Township to build more housing, it should also provide increased funding to support the resulting needs. Without additional state support, the burden falls on the school budget, forcing the Finance Committee to find alternative sources of funding to balance the budget. Mr. Scales pointed out the unfairness of this situation, where the state actively takes money away while imposing new requirements on the Township.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS / SAFETY AND SECURITY

1. Installation of two (2) Pergolas at CDMS

Mr. Marasco reported that the pergola project is moving forward with funding primarily provided by the outstanding 2023 PTO Legacy Grant funds. Additional costs have been identified, including expenses for landscaping work to create a base and minimal costs related to the permitting application process. A schematic also needs to be drawn up, which adds to the overall cost.

JCP&L is involved in confirming placement details for the pergola to be installed near the CDMS cafeteria. Efforts are being made to have the courtyard pergola ready in time for the 60th anniversary. The first pergola to be worked on will be for the courtyard of Cedar Drive Middle School (CDMS). An additional landscaper is submitting quotations for both planned pergola spaces.

2. CDMS Parking Lot Lights

Mr. Walsh expressed concern about the insufficient lighting at Cedar Drive Middle School. A proposal for a study was provided by Mr. Marasco to address the issue. The proposal was approximately \$10,800 which Mr. Walsh expressed is excessive and unjustifiable, especially since no actual work would be conducted.

Mr. Walsh explained how construction projects typically involve obtaining free estimates from vendors. These estimates include associated engineering and contractor costs, eliminating the need for a separate, costly study. He argued that a different approach should be taken, especially for straightforward projects that do not require extensive analysis, and reserve studies for more complex issues such as demographic studies for affordable housing.

He critiqued specific aspects of the study's cost breakdown for Cedar Drive Middle School, including:

- Project manager billing \$221 per hour for two hours.
- Electrical engineer billing \$189 per hour for 33 hours.
- Junior electrical engineer, also allocated 33 hours, though the role was not clearly defined.

Mr. Walsh called these costs "absolutely ludicrous" and emphasized his commitment to protecting taxpayers and ensuring project efficiency. He expressed his intention to work closely with Dr. Garibay and Mr. Marasco, acknowledging their adherence to state statutes.

Finally, Mr. Walsh advocated for exploring cost-saving measures, such as reaching out to local vendors and contractors in Colts Neck Township who might provide competitive pricing and support the local economy. His focus is on balancing fiscal responsibility with the needs of the school district.

Mrs. Volpe commented that the lighting is definitely a concern to her, but she is committed to the zero tax impact, and at this time that will probably have to be on the back burner as a possible project for next year..

Dr. Garibay explained that in the interim, maintenance staff, led by Mr. Moretta, attempted to improve lighting at Cedar Drive Middle School by replacing some of the headers to make the existing lights brighter and project further. However, this adjustment does not add new lighting, but enhances the current fixtures, which relies on light posts dating back to 1964.

Dr. Garibay noted that the lights had already been converted to LED in the past to improve brightness and conserve energy. As a result, any improvement was ineligible for funding under the ESIP project, which identifies fixtures eligible for LED replacement, for energy efficiency.

Looking ahead, Dr. Garibay mentioned the possibility of cost-sharing opportunities, given that the school's fields and facilities, including tennis and pickleball courts, are frequently used by the community outside of school hours. These shared services could support adding lighting to benefit both the school and the town.

Historically, school-related events have typically been concluded before dark, except for winter sports or occasional night functions. However, Dr. Garibay emphasized the importance of considering broader community needs when evaluating lighting proposals. The next step is to proceed with reviewing vendor proposals and identifying the scope / scale of improvements.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Future BOE Communications Opportunities

There was no discussion.

CURRICULUM

1. Middle School Holocaust Studies / Assemblies

Sara Horowitz noted that she is involved with the Jewish Federation here in Monmouth County as well as an organization called 3G, which was founded by grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. As a granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor herself, she always wants to share any kind of opportunity for our younger generations to be able to learn more about the Holocaust.

She understands from Dr. Garibay that the district has a very strong Holocaust curriculum, but given the rise in anti-Semitism over the last few years, she thinks it could be incredibly impactful to invite a 3G speaker to share their grandparents' firsthand experiences of their survival and their strength. She knows a lot of other local school districts have already incorporated this type of program, and she wanted to see if that was something that we could potentially implement in the near future.

Dr. Garibay requested that Mrs. Horowitz send her the information and she will share it with the administration and staff. She emphasized the importance of fostering multi-generational connections and traditions, recognizing their special and unique value. She also highlighted the district's pride in its partnership with Change, which will be featured as part of the 60th-anniversary celebrations. Dr. Garibay hinted at exciting surprises planned for the event, underscoring the importance of these experiences for the students.

2. JROTC Program Inquiry Update

Dr. Garibay reported that she has been in communication with Dr. Hazel and Dr. Donahue at the High School, Dr. Rigby, Dr. Reynolds, and Major Penzac to coordinate a meeting to discuss the JROTC program. The tentative meeting is being scheduled for next week. She will update the Board once the

meeting date is finalized.

Additionally, the tentative budget under review includes funding for both a facilitator for an after-school program and program development, ensuring these elements are accounted for in the current budget planning process.

3. Supplemental Resources for Mathematics (Special Education/Tier Interventions) - ST MATH

Mrs. Camera reported that there was an upcoming meeting scheduled with Dr. Erica Reynolds, Ms. Tina Kennis, and a representative from ST Math to explore the program. She recommends piloting ST Math specifically for special education and Tier 1 students to address learning gaps, citing the program's strong data support and cost-effectiveness.

The cost would be approximately \$3,500 for 150 students, which breaks down to about \$23.33 per student for the year. Teacher feedback will help determine if the program should be expanded to all students. Further updates will be shared at the next board meeting, along with additional information on the digital resource inventory.

Dr. Garibay clarified that the meeting was actually held on March 3rd and she further responded to Mrs. Camera's report on ST Math by clarifying several key points:

- The cost structure for ST Math is not per student but rather based on site licenses. For a pilot program, two site licenses would need to be purchased, costing around \$2,500. Full implementation would cost \$12,000 for the two licenses.
- Dr. Garibay noted discrepancies between the provided cost estimates and the quotes received from Lance Matus, the local representative.
- ST Math is currently used by four districts in Monmouth County (Marlboro, Manalapan, Spring Lake Heights, and Long Branch).
- While ST Math focuses exclusively on mathematics, IXL integrates multiple subjects and generates individualized learning plans based on NWEA data, making it a more versatile option.
- Dr. Garibay raised concerns about ST Math's effectiveness, as it requires 90 minutes of weekly online engagement, compared to IXL's 45 minutes.

She suggested further discussion with teachers regarding implementation and emphasized the importance of vendor-recommended usage guidelines.

4. Digital Resources Inventory

Mrs. Camera reported that In terms of the digital resource inventory, she had requested administration to complete a review of the current computer programs the district utilizes across all subjects, including data on the program usage. She is hopeful that if the review finds that the district has some programs that are underutilized it will allow it to make some better decisions for the budget.

Dr. Garibay noted that the tentative budget reflects efforts from 2024, focusing on cost analysis and program utilization, such as SAVVAS, which offers lower per-pupil costs. A post-COVID technology

audit, conducted three to four years ago, helped identify valuable resources and eliminate less effective ones, ensuring a streamlined set of tools for educators. Streamlining resources across grade levels fosters consistency and prevents students from having to adapt to new programs as they progress. This approach enables better measurement of program effectiveness and its impact on student learning. Dr. Garibay will provide further updates for the 2024-2025 academic year.

5. K-5 Savvas enVision Math Program Resources

Mrs. Camera emphasized her concerns regarding the lack of additional practice workbooks for third through fifth graders in the SAVVAS enVision Math program. Although some teachers have expressed disinterest in the workbooks, Mrs. Camera recalls that years ago, many teachers were unaware of this resource's availability. She finds it surprising that educators might not want an extra resource to support student learning, especially for benchmarks, midterms, enrichment, or aiding struggling students.

She noted that the workbooks include sample problems to assist parents in understanding "new math," something printing from the online platform cannot easily replace due to its user-unfriendly nature. Mrs. Camera suggested conducting a survey among parents and teachers to gauge interest in the workbooks. Feedback from the survey would help the Board decide whether budgeting for this resource should be prioritized.

Dr. Garibay provided the following clarifications and insights regarding the SAVVAS Envision math program workbooks:

- Students in grades K-5 use Volume 1 and Volume 2 workbooks as part of their instruction, both available in tangible form and digitally through Chromebooks.
- An online practice component, called the "practice buddy," is used by both teachers and students.
- This workbook is used regularly as homework reinforcement for grades K-2 but is available only digitally for grades 3-5. When homework is assigned at the 3-5 grade level, students complete the work in math notebooks rather than directly online.
- Teachers assign homework and practice based on small group work and individual student needs, using various resources such as workbooks, the practice buddy, or additional worksheets.

Dr. Garibay suggested first surveying the usage and effectiveness of the additional practice workbook at the K-2 level before expanding its use to higher grades. She noted the importance of considering personalized approaches and existing resources. Additionally, teachers were trained in the program and informed of the various resources and options available.

Dr. Garibay deferred to the Board's decision on next steps but supported gathering data to inform the process. It was agreed that a survey would be put out to staff and parents of students in grades K-2.

6. 2025 Summer Bridge Update

Dr. Garibay reported that the Summer Bridge program is being proposed and developed on a scaled-back version and is included within the tentative budget. As of this morning, there were 90 responses for participation, as opposed to last year which was between 120-130, with about 100 regular attendees. The deadline for responses is this week. Dr. Garibay also noted that the district successfully secured a \$138,000 competitive grant the first year, being the only one in Monmouth County to win it. Subsequently, the district obtained another grant, the high-impact tutoring grant, and co-funded the program with federal, ARP funds. Until now, the program has been entirely grant-funded, with this year marking its inclusion in the local budget.

7. K-5 Being A Writer Pilot - Update

Mrs. Camera reported on the "Being a Writer" program and proposed implementing it incrementally to manage costs and teacher training effectively. The program for K-2 would cost approximately \$23,000, with an additional \$3,000 for training, and the same applies to grades 3-5. She suggested starting with K-2 in the upcoming year, allowing the second-grade cohort to continue with the program as they progress, which would help distribute financial and training demands over time.

Mrs. Camera highlighted three advantages of this approach: reducing the immediate financial burden, enabling gradual teacher training, and supporting sustainable budget management. Beginning with younger students ensures a smooth introduction of the program and continuity as they advance through grade levels. This recommendation bridges curriculum and finance, emphasizing careful planning for implementation.

Dr. Garibay responded to Mrs. Camera's report on the "Being a Writer" program by emphasizing the importance of addressing writing as an academic priority due to its impact on NJSLA scores. She highlighted the following points:

- Writing has been identified as an area of concern based on data analysis, prompting the pilot of the program.
- Significant improvements in on-demand writing scores have already been observed in the pilot, with grade 4 pilot classes achieving higher results compared to non-pilot classes.
- Delaying full K-5 implementation would result in repeated professional development costs, as these are consultant-based rather than teacher-based.
- Teachers have expressed support for the program and are seeing its benefits across grade levels through articulations.

Dr. Garibay strongly advocates for maintaining K-5 implementation in the upcoming year, emphasizing that students need this program immediately to improve writing scores. She considers the program an academic priority, comparable in urgency to addressing security issues, and does not recommend delaying its implementation unless absolutely necessary.

8. K-5 Social Studies Program

Mrs. Camera noted that Dr. Reynolds had not presented information about the social studies program and she emphasized the importance of understanding the program, as it accounts for over \$20,000 in

the budget.

Dr. Garibay clarified that the social studies program is not entirely new but is relatively new, appearing in the budget for the first time this year. The program development began in 2022 with a K-5 teacher committee that piloted three programs, using free resources provided by the vendors. Following the pilot, the selected program was fully implemented last year using stabilization aid for funding. The current budget marks the first year the program's costs are included, which may give the impression of it being a new initiative.

Mrs. Camera inquired what the other programs were that were piloted. Dr. Garibay advised that they were: TCI, Young Citizens, and Savvas My World Interactive. The Rubrics from everything that was piloted were presented to the Curriculum Committee in 2022.

FINANCE

1. 2025-26 Preschool Tuition Rates

Mr. Orrico noted that the '25-26 preschool tuition rate of \$8,300 was approved earlier this evening, however, limited transportation is not being offered this year.

Dr. Garibay explained the reasoning behind not offering the transportation component this year, noting that the decision stems from two primary reasons. Firstly, the district is required to provide transportation for preschool students with disabilities, which has led to logistical challenges. In past years, as more preschool disabled students enrolled over the summer, it created complications with the length of bus routes and the number of students on buses. This was further exacerbated when parents of tuition-based preschoolers utilized the limited available transportation spots.

Secondly, offering transportation for preschoolers does not generate additional revenue; rather, it offsets the cost of an already existing transportation run. Due to these challenges and limited seat availability, a strong recommendation was made to discontinue offering transportation for preschool tuition spots this year. The district noted that only a small number of families previously utilized this option, and therefore, it will not be available moving forward.

2. Fiscal Year 2026 State Aid

Mr. Orrico reviewed the State Aid figures which are as follows:

- Categorical transportation aid - \$594,824
- Categorical special education aid - \$1,204,415
- Categorical security aid - \$131,095
- Military impact aid - \$1,523,650

3. 2025-2026 Budget Updates

Mr. Orrico reported that the committee is still working towards a 0% tax increase for Colts Neck taxpayers.

Mr. Scarpa reported that the Ad Hoc committee will continue to meet with the administration to go over the proposed budget for 2026. They are working line-by-line to appreciate any opportunities of efficiencies of scale. The committee is keeping a close eye on cost infrastructure as they proceed forward for this year as well as the next year.

He will continue to update the Board as a whole as the committee proceeds forward with its carve-out of numbers and better appreciation of anticipated expenses, especially due to the rising costs of potential infrastructure due to the housing responsibilities coming our way for the next three years.

Regarding the Summer Bridge Program, the Board commends the work, drive and initiative of Dr. Garibay to obtain grants to fund the program for the first few years. Moving forward, a keen eye is needed to look for opportunities and grants from the state.

POLICY - FROM ALERT 234

Mr. Scales reported on Strauss Esmay Policy Alert 234, highlighting key updates in Numbers 1 through 7, which clarify the roles and responsibilities of the district, administration, and law enforcement. He noted surprise at the improved policies and added verbiage, particularly regarding electronic surveillance and cooperation with law enforcement. In the past, while the district's cooperation was strong, the state lacked effective collaboration. The updated policies now clearly define law enforcement's role during school incidents and emergencies, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of responsibilities in such situations.

Dr. Garibay discussed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Law Enforcement and the district's commitment to school safety. The MOA, which is reviewed and customized annually with local law enforcement, ensures compliance and high standards through collaboration with the chief of police and school lieutenant. Dr. Garibay highlighted that the updated policies and regulations effectively integrate MOA requirements, providing clearer guidance and enhancing their effectiveness. She expressed pride in the district's efforts, which exceed the minimum MOA requirements, particularly in areas such as communication and safety measures.

Additionally, Dr. Garibay mentioned her advocacy for increased school safety funding. She testified twice before the Joint Committee for Public Schools, addressing statewide safety shortfalls and the need for additional resources. This advocacy contributed to the state's commitment to increased funding for school safety and security. Dr. Garibay emphasized that such funding is crucial to providing all students and staff in New Jersey with safe and secure learning environments. Dr. Garibay further noted that these policies have also gone to the building administrators for review and feedback, so if there's any feedback prior to March 19th from the board or administration or if anyone has questions she will certainly share that with Mr. Scales and the Board ahead of time.

1. P5512 - Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying ([Attachment # P-1](#))
2. P5533 - Student Smoking ([Attachment # P-2](#))
3. R5533 - Student Smoking (NEW) ([Attachment # P-3](#))
4. P7441 - Electronic Surveillance in School Buildings and On School Grounds ([Attachment # P-4](#))
5. R7441 - Electronic Surveillance in School Buildings and On School Grounds ([Attachment # P-5](#))
6. P9320 - Cooperation with Law Enforcement Agencies ([Attachment # P-6](#))
7. R9320 - Cooperation with Law Enforcement Agencies ([Attachment # P-7](#))

8. P & R 2330 - Homework / Continuing discussion - student chromebook use
- Policy 2330 ([Attachment # P-8](#))
 - Regulation 2330 ([Attachment # P-9](#))

Mr. Scales addressed the Homework policy by distinguishing between the policy and the regulation. While the policy provides standard verbiage for parents and others, the regulation, aimed at administration, includes a final paragraph in bold that emphasizes the roles of teachers and students and encourages communication between instructors and parents.

He noted that the regulation does not specifically address additional assignments or practices, such as using extra books, which might not qualify as "homework" but rather as supplemental practice. Mr. Scales suggested that the distinction between homework and extra instruction might require clearer verbiage and expressed interest in exploring potential revisions for consistency.

Mrs. Camera expressed concerns about the lack of clarity in the Homework Regulation and proposed several changes to ensure consistency and improved communication. She suggested removing the line permitting exceptions to the regulation based on a teacher's program, as it creates ambiguity. Mrs. Camera emphasized the importance of requiring teachers to post all homework assignments to Google Classroom or the designated online platform, highlighting feedback from parents struggling to access assignments. She believes this change would enhance communication, particularly for situations like student illness or vacations. Mrs. Camera advocated for revisiting and revising the policy to eliminate gray areas and ensure all teachers consistently use Google Classroom for homework posting.

9. CDMS Classroom Cell Phone Storage Pilot, continuation
- Parent Survey Results

Gr. Garibay reported on the results of a cell phone survey sent to parents, initiated by Dr. Rigby per the direction of the Board. The survey received 74 responses, with 75.7% in favor ("yes") and 24.3% opposed ("no"). Dr. Garibay noted that the survey targeted 208 potential students, though some responses may include parents of 7th and 8th graders. Comments from respondents were also provided for the board's review. While a majority of responses supported the proposal, the overall response rate was typical for such surveys. Dr. Garibay suggested that comments and results could guide further discussions.

NEGOTIATIONS

None

TRANSPORTATION

None

PERSONNEL - ITEMS ANTICIPATED FOR THE MARCH 19, 2025 RAM

1. Recommendation to approve a Resignation of Instructional Assistant - CRPS
2. Recommendation to approve FMLA Leave of Absence Instructional Assistant - CDMA
3. Recommendation to approve School Nurse Stipend for CRPS Extracurricular Activity
4. Recommendation to approve Chaperon School Musical - CDMS
5. Recommendation to approve Instructional Assistant - CRPS
6. Recommendation to approve a Resignation of Instructional Assistant - CRES
7. Recommendation to approve a Resignation of Teacher - CRPS

COMMENTS FROM ATTENDING CONSTITUENTS - ALL SUBJECTS

- Alice Finney, 96 Five Points Road - commended the Board for their work and support of the recently passed women's sports policy, referencing the case of Peyton McNabb to stress its importance. She also praised Mrs. Camera's efforts to elevate schools to Blue Ribbon status and supported the idea of using Google Classroom for consistent access to student information, emphasizing the benefits for busy parents like herself.
As a former high school teacher, Mrs. Finney highlighted issues with cell phone use in schools, advocating for stricter policies such as requiring phones to remain in lockers to avoid distractions, interruptions, and potential bullying. She emphasized the importance of teaching social skills to students, suggesting alternatives like books or games during downtime to foster interpersonal interaction.
Additionally, she proposed introducing the theory of creation into the science curriculum as a counterpoint to evolutionary theory, citing the intricate designs in nature as evidence of an intelligent designer. Mrs. Finney expressed appreciation for the Board's openness to public input and thanked them for their work.
- Mallory Reardon, 165 Laird Road - shared her positive experience with the SEL program, noting its role in helping her son develop social skills, collaborate on projects, and accept outcomes where his ideas were not chosen. She emphasized the program's value in fostering these essential skills.
She also addressed the recent cut in state aid, referencing funding changes in other districts to argue that the issue transcends political affiliations. She referenced several other districts, i.e. Toms River Regional District - 6% increase; Middletown Township (also another conservative area) - 6% increase; and Red Bank Borough (a primarily Democratic town) - 3% cut. Mrs. Reardon encouraged the Board to approach the matter as a bipartisan concern focused on securing the best outcomes for students, rather than framing it as political punishment. She highlighted the need for transparency in the state's funding formula and expressed frustration over its lack of clarity. Mrs. Reardon concluded by advocating for unity within the town to address the funding challenges effectively.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Mrs. Volpe reported on recent developments and upcoming initiatives. She shared that Mr. Tobia, chairman of the planning board, reached out to discuss adding two liaisons to a subcommittee addressing affordable housing challenges. Mrs. Volpe appointed Mr. Rob Scales, the Board Chair for the Ad Hoc Committee on Affordable Housing, and Mr. Kevin Walsh, a retired police sergeant with 27 years of public service in Colts Neck, to these roles. She expressed confidence in their abilities and thanked Mr. Tobia for including the Board in these discussions, despite Mr. Viola voting against having committee liaisons.
Additionally, she noted that March 19th will feature a meeting to honor students' achievements, including those on the honor roll and high honor roll. Discussions are ongoing to recognize students in special needs programs who have achieved milestones.
Lastly she will be attending, along with Dr. Garibay, Dr. Rigby and Lauren Hums, Guidance Counselor, the Monmouth County 8th Grade Dialogue recognizing an 8th Grade student.
- Mrs. Camera inquired about the potential of having a funding mechanism with regard to donations for student liaison projects. Dr. Garibay cautioned that payment services would need to be vetted through more discussion with the district's auditor..
Mrs. Camera shared that she and Mrs. Volpe participated in a call with Bill Spadia, a Republican gubernatorial candidate, as private citizens, not as Board of Education members. During the discussion, Mr. Spadia emphasized the importance of school boards establishing a parents' bill of rights to enhance parental involvement in education. Mrs. Camera suggested that this topic could be worth exploring further within the policy committee.
Mrs. Camera reflected on her proposal to implement the "Being a Writer" program incrementally for K-2 and 3-5 and acknowledged Dr. Garibay's preparedness and data insights. She emphasized the importance of considering the unique composition of each class, including factors like tiered students, special education needs, and teacher abilities, when comparing data.

While she still recommends starting with K-2, she appreciated the feedback regarding the training costs. For budgetary reasons, she suggested it might be more practical to implement K-2 one year and 3-5 the next, rather than a more gradual approach. Mrs. Camera committed to sharing the data with the Board for further review and thanked everyone for their consideration.
- Dr. Garibay discussed the work she, Mrs. Horowitz, Mrs. Volpe, and Dr. Beck have done with the Parent Advisory Committees over the past year and a half, focusing on topics like Chromebook screen time and parental

feedback. She proposed forming a team of stakeholders, including Board members, parents, and teachers, to analyze screen time and resources for K-2 students and define a balanced approach aligned with recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Dr. Garibay emphasized that technology use today differs from her teaching experience, as teachers now receive formal training in integrating technology. She suggested collaboratively developing guidelines that prioritize balance rather than rigid screen time limits.

- Mrs. Camera mentioned the ongoing work on the entry for the "Updates in the Innovations in Special Education Award." She noted receiving an email reminder, likely sent to all board members, indicating that the submission is due by 4:30 p.m. on March 21st. Dr. Garibay responded to Mrs. Camera by noting that Dr. Beck is working with staff on the award submission and confirmed that the program being proposed is the ABLES program, which previously won a national award for its achievements in physical therapy and interventions. This program was chosen due to its detailed data and strong student outcomes.

Dr. Garibay assured that the submission will be completed by the deadline and suggested the possibility of sharing elements of the application with the public, either through a presentation or otherwise. She mentioned that she and Dr. Beck had previously presented on the ABLES program at a National School Boards Association conference in Florida two or three years ago and is open to sharing that presentation as well.

EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION (N.J.S.A. 10:4-9,12)

At approximately 8:50 p.m President Volpe announced that the Board would move into Executive Session for no more than ten (10) minutes to discuss litigation matters. She further announced that action would not be taken afterwards and articulated that Executive discussion may be disclosed upon future resolution.

It was moved by Brian Scarpa, seconded by Vincent Rugnetta and carried on a unanimous roll call vote in the affirmative to move into Executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 9:06 pm, it was moved by Angelique Volpe, seconded by Phyllis Camera and carried on a unanimous roll call vote to adjourn the meeting.

Yes: Phyllis Camera, Sara Horowitz (remote), Jason Orrico, Vincent Rugnetta, Robert Scales, Brian Scarpa, Angelique Volpe and Kevin Walsh

No: None

Absent: Jessica Ramirez

REFERENCE SHEET	
Attachment # F-1	Board Secretary's Report as of December 31, 2024
Attachment # F-2	Treasurer's Report as of December 31, 2024
Attachment # P-1	P5512 - Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying
Attachment # P-2	P5533 - Student Smoking
Attachment # P-3	R5533 - Student Smoking (NEW)
Attachment # P-4	P7441 - Electronic Surveillance in School Buildings and On School Grounds
Attachment # P-5	R7441 - Electronic Surveillance in School Buildings and On School Grounds
Attachment # P-6	P9320 - Cooperation with Law Enforcement Agencies
Attachment # P-7	R9320 - Cooperation with Law Enforcement Agencies
Attachment # P-8	P2330 - Homework
Attachment # P-9	R2330 - Homework

BOARD MEETINGS*			
March 19, 2025 @ CRPS	June 4, 2025 @CRPS	August 20, 2025	November 5, 2025
April 8, 2025	June 18, 2025	September 3, 2025	November 19, 2025
April 23, 2025	July 9, 2025	September 17, 2025	December 3, 2025
May 7, 2025	July 23, 2025	October 7, 2025	December 17, 2025
May 21, 2025	August 6, 2025	October 15, 2025	
January 7, 2026 @ 6:00 (Organization Meeting)			

* All Regular Board Meetings will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Administration Building unless otherwise noted and advertised.

2025		
Friday	April 11	Short Session Day - Students & Staff - Start of Spring Recess
Monday - Monday	April 14 - April 21	Spring Recess – Schools/Central Office Closed
Tuesday	April 22	Schools Reopen
Friday	May 23	Short Session Day for Students Full Day for Staff with In-Service After Student Dismissal
Monday	May 26	Memorial Day - Schools/Central Office Closed
Monday	June 23	Short Session Day for Students / Full Day for Staff
Tuesday	June 24	Last Day of School - Short Session Day for Students and Staff

Respectfully Submitted,

Vincent S. Marasco

Vincent S. Marasco

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary