

**THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ESSEX FELLS, NJ
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2025

REGULAR MEETING – 7:30 P.M. – MEDIA CENTER

In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Laws of 1975, a notice for this meeting was posted at the respective offices of the Essex Fells School as of January 8th, 2025. Agendas were mailed to the Clerk of the Borough of Essex Fells, the Progress, and the Star Ledger.

I. Call to Order – 7:30 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Mrs. Amanda Haber, President
Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke, Vice-President
Mrs. Caragh Lavoie
Mr. Raj Mehta
Mr. Christopher Pisacane

III. Flag Salute

IV. President's Report

V. Student Liaison to the BOE Report

- Alex Spellman

VI. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

VII. Superintendent's Report

- Report Cards 12/12
- Kindergarten/Preschool Registration 1/20 – 1/26
- All School Concert and Holiday Wishes
- Thank you Mrs. Burke and Mrs. Lavoie

VIII. Superintendent's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–10.

- 1. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the payment of the following travel related expenses in accordance with the travel policy 6471 for Professional Development:

AGENDA

December 17, 2025

Staff Member(s): Steve Lella
Event: K-12 Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management
Location: Lyndhurst, NJ
Date: 12/11/25
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Gabriella Day
Event: Art Therapy-Creative Interventions for Kids with Trauma, Anxiety, ADHD, and More
Location: Virtual
Date: 12/18/25
Cost: \$124.99

Staff Member(s): Michelle Barshay
Event: Winter Synergy Meeting
Location: Verona, NJ
Date: 12/22/25
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Rebecca Fogarty
Event: Strengthening the Executive Function Skills of Your Students with Special Needs
Location: Virtual
Date: 1/26/26
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Marco Pannullo
Event: Techspo 26
Location: Atlantic City, NJ
Date: 1/28/26-1/30/26
Cost: \$1,248.26

Staff Member(s): Michelle Barshay
Event: Motivating the Unmotivated
Location: Virtual
Date: 1/30/26
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Lauren Brzostowski
Event: NJCEC 2026 Spring Conference
Location: Mahwah, NJ
Date: 3/16/26
Cost: \$199.14

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of Innovative Therapy Group, for the 2025-2026 school year, at the following rate:

Special Education Teacher \$70 per hour/35 hours per week

Moved by: Seconded by:

Ayes: Nays:

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of Belinda O'Donnell, Substitute Teacher, for the 2025-2026 school year.

Moved by: Seconded by:

Ayes: Nays:

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Use of Facilities Request for the following:

EFFE – Winter 2026 Enrichment Programs
1/20/26 – 3/19/26
Gymnasium & Classrooms

Moved by: Seconded by:

Ayes: Nays:

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Use of Facilities Request for the following:

EFFE – Musical - Peter Pan Jr.
1/05/26 – 3/14/26
Rehearsals Tuesday's and Wednesday's
Gymnasium

Moved by: Seconded by:

Ayes: Nays:

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the submission of the updated 2025-2026 QSAC – DPRs to the New Jersey Department of Education.

Notes: Completed DPR's in Superintendent's Office

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

7. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2026-2027 Essex Fells School Calendar.

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

8. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of Susan Hacker, Mentor to Donna Phillips, Mentee beginning January 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026.

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

9. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the following contracts with the Essex Regional Educational Services Commission for the 2025-2026 School Year:

1. Transportation of Special Education and / or specific destinations of school Students (370784)

NOTE: Contracts with BA

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

10. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Out-of-District Program Costs at The Deron School (Student 370784) for the 2025-2026 school year, at the following daily/yearly rates:

Estimated 109 days at \$433.24/day for:

• January 5, 2026 through June 30, 2026 \$47,223.16

Total school year cost not to exceed: \$47,223.16

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

IX. Business Administrator's Report

- 2024-25 Audit Update
- 2026-27 Budget Update
- Annual NJSBA BOE Member Training

X. Business Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-04.

- 1. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts the minutes of the following meeting(s):

Regular Meeting Minutes November 12th, 2025

Regular Workshop Minutes December 3rd, 2025

Moved by: Seconded by:

Ayes: Nays:

- 2. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for December in the amount of \$241,364.83, as certified by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for November as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$402,953.81 including \$376,463.97 for the gross payroll, \$5,510.44 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$20,979.40 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Seconded by:

Ayes: Nays:

- 3. WHEREAS**, the Board of Education has received the Reports of the Board Secretary (Secretary) and the Custodian of School Monies (Treasurer) for the Month of October.

WHEREAS, in compliance with N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.11(c)3, the Secretary has certified that as of the date of the reports, no budgetary line-item account, in accordance with the minimum chart of accounts as established by the New Jersey Department of Education, has obligations and payments which in total exceed the amount appropriated by the Board of Education;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that in compliance with N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.11(c)4, the Board of Education certifies that, after review of the Secretary's monthly financial report, and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials, to the best of its N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.11(c)4, and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that pursuant to P.L. 2004 C73, the Board certifies that after review of the Secretary’s monthly financial report and certification, that there are no budgetary transfers that cumulatively exceed 10% that would require the approval of the Commissioner of Education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the financial reports for the months be accepted and shall become a part of the official minutes of this meeting.

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the transfer of funds for the month of November as certified by the School Business Administrator and authorized by the Superintendent of Schools.

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

XI. Old Business / Board Discussion

- BOE President & Vice President 2026

XII. New Business / Board Discussion

- PTA Egg Hunt
- BOE Workshop Meeting Location

XIII. Public Comment

XIV. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at ____ P.M. The Reorganizational/workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, January 7th, 2025, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by:

Seconded by:

Ayes:

Nays:

AGENDA

December 17, 2025

2025-2026

Teacher	Section	Total	M	F
Mrs. Axentiou	PK	16	7	9
Ms. Matullo	KM	17	7	10
Mrs. Brutman	KB	17	7	10
Mrs. Fitzgerald/Mrs. Hromoko	1FH	15	7	8
Mrs. Gann	1G	15	7	8
Mrs. Quinn/Mrs. Takkel	2QT	19	12	7
Ms. Duarte	2D	20	12	8
Ms. Kowalski/Mrs. MacKenzie	3KM	15	9	6
Mrs. Focarino	3F	14	8	6
Mrs. Banek/Mrs. Ennis	4BE	18	8	10
Mrs. Lodato	4L	15	7	8
Mrs. Fogarty	5F	20	10	10
Mrs. Jaworski/Mrs. Brzostowski	5JB	20	8	12
Mrs. Santalla/Mrs. Banta	6SB	16	12	4
Mrs. Hacker	6H	14	10	4
TOTAL		251	131	120
Out-of-District	*	3		
FINAL TOTALS		254		
TOTAL FAMILIES		170		

*Total includes 3 out-of-district students.

10/27/2025

Fire Drills: 2025-2026

Month	Fire Drill	Emergency Drill
August	8/22/25	AED/Fire alarm Tests – August 22, 2025
September	9/15/25	Evacuation to Bleachers – September 12, 2025
October	10/24/25	Lockdown – October 29, 2025
November	11/24/25	Shelter in Place with EFPD - November 25, 2025
December	12/10/25	Shelter in Place - December 15, 2025
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July	7/17/2025	Silent Alarm Test – July 3, 2025

HIB / V&V Report

As of Date of BOE Meeting	8/13	9/3	9/17	10/15	11/12	12/3	12/17								
TOTAL# of Reported Incidents	0	0	0	0	1	0	0								
Number of Unfounded Incidents	0	0	0	0	1	0	0								
Number of Founded Incidents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Violence & Vandalism Incidents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0								

ESSEX FELS SCHOOL
DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The Essex Fells School is a very special public elementary school enrolling boys and girls in preschool through the sixth grades. Pupils enjoy small classes and a total school population of approximately two hundred and fifty.

The size of the school is a wonderful asset as it allows a strong sense of community and offers teachers and pupils many opportunities to form bonds of collegiality, identification and support. It also supports the concept that every adult in the school is responsible for every child.

The comparatively small faculty is also a benefit. The faculty as a whole are the decision-making body on all questions of teaching and learning. Teachers find it easy to share experiences and act consistently across pupils' entire academic program. The combined efforts of the staff work to support a pupil centered approach to education.

Essex Fells teachers are encouraged to try new ideas, to work collaboratively with colleagues, and to participate fully in all aspects of schooling.

The mission of the school is etched in the mortar of the original schoolhouse with the words Studies Pass Into Character.

The primary goals of an Essex Fells education include:

1. Developing in all pupils the capacity to think critically and communicate effectively through a mastery of written and spoken English.
2. Motivating all pupils to recognize and develop their academic abilities in order to build character and to achieve their full potential.
3. Teaching children to value themselves, their peers and their teachers.
4. Establishing a respect for and a strong sense of responsibility to the physical, social, and aesthetic world around them.
5. Nurturing a love of country and a pride in our American heritage and citizenship.
6. Communicating a love of scholarship and continued interest in life-long learning.
7. Ensuring all pupils will achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards at all levels.

To secure these common goals, the Essex Fells staff of professional educators recognizes that the collaborative engagement of the children in the learning process is the key to intellectual development. Dedicated teachers create classrooms that are alive with cooperative learning activities and child-centered problem-solving routines. Children are encouraged to explore, to question, to make decisions, and to express opinions in a supportive learning environment. Teachers also model their own commitment to learning by continuing to earn advanced degrees. On-going professional development is acknowledged as the foundation for promoting outstanding pupil achievement.