

The business meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on February 26, 2026, at the New Providence High School/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, by Mrs. Marano, Board President.

Present on the roll call were Laura Castellano, Dr. Kristen Empson Hayden, Stacey Gunderman, Amanda Marano, Rupa Kale, Amy Lepre, and Donna Zane. Also present were Dr. Lauren Zirpoli, Superintendent of Schools, Joseph Ugialoro, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Jonathan Keaney, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Supervision, James Testa, School Business Administrator/Board, and sixty-eight (68) members of the public.

Mrs. Marano in the salute to the flag.

Mrs. Marano read the following statement:

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

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

BOARD PRESIDENT COMMENTS

Mrs. Marano greeted the public. She commented that tonight's meeting is her favorite meeting of the year because the Board gets to see what students are doing in each of the schools. She also thanked all of the custodians and maintenance staff for clearing out the parking lots and sidewalks and allowing students back in school after the snow days.

STUDENT REPORT

Mr. Brenner's student report is as follows: Good evening, and thank you, Dr. Zirpoli and the rest of the board for having me tonight.

January

- Since our last meeting, midterms took place at the end of January, and our students rose to the occasion to see successful outcomes and results.

February

- On Saturday, February 7th, we hosted the Shining Stars Network and several students as a part of our Spread the Word To End the Word Inclusion Event. Our Girls' and Boys' Basketball teams, as well as the many spectators, joined our Shining Stars for a dance performance and full basketball game during halftime of the Varsity games. It was an incredible event once again this year.

March

- On Thursday, March 5th, is our Cake Wars event for students in the Culinary Arts classes. The theme this year is LOVE, and students are putting the final touches on their creative masterpieces. We look forward to seeing the teacher and administrative guest judges decide our winners.
- The Spring Musical, The Drowsy Chaperon, is coming up next week, Thursday, March 5-Saturday, March 7th. There are four shows in total, with the times being 7:30 pm each evening and a 2:00 pm show on Saturday, March 7th. Come out to support our cast, pit, crew, and directors.

- On March 25, we have an SAT School Day.
- On March 28, the PTSA's big Tricky Tray Fashion Show. The theme this year is "Bright Lights, Big City." We are excited to see the many Senior Models, including myself, who will be participating.

Club Updates

- The STEM Club is ramping up its progress with the STEM parent-teacher association, and they had about 89 kids competing in the TEAMS competition. They are currently getting into the cybersecurity season, with preparation for the Garden State Capture the Flag competition underway. Lots of exciting things are planned for the STEM club.

Winter Athletics

- Girls' Basketball- The Girls' basketball team had a thrilling three-point win this past Saturday over Westfield to win the Union County Championship and improve their record to an incredible 24-1. They will look to continue their success in the state playoffs with their first round game tomorrow at home against Dunellen at 4:00 p.m.
- Boys' Basketball- Boys' Basketball has also been doing well, winning 4 of their last 6 games. They look to have a successful state run starting tomorrow when they play at Piscataway Magnet.
- Wrestling- The wrestling team recently had two duals last Friday and Saturday, where the team found success. Senior Braeden Valley set two incredible school records- most wins in school history and also reached 100 pins in his career, accomplishing both feats last weekend. Congratulations to the team and Braeden.
- Ice Hockey- The Ice Hockey team is competing in the state tournament, where they earned an 8-0 victory in the first round over Freehold Township. They will be going up against Toms River East tomorrow evening in Round Two.
- Swimming- The Girls' Swimming Team took home our first-ever State Sectional Championship, defeating Governor Livingston. Congratulations to the girls on this amazing accomplishment. The Boys' Team had a tremendous season as well, and the Seniors have paved the way for future team success.
- Winter Track- The Winter Track Team also took home their first-ever Sectional Championship. The coaching staff and team should be commended on a record-breaking season.
- Winter Cheer- Finally, the Cheer Team looks to have success in their upcoming state competition at Brookdale Community College.

ENROLLMENT

Mr. Uglialoro gave a summary of the current enrollment. Allen W. Roberts School has 600 students, Salt Brook School has 596 students, New Providence High School has 667 students, New Providence Middle School has 388 students, and lastly, 39 out-of-district students, to give us a total of 2,290 students.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Zirpoli echoed Mrs. Marano's sentiment on tonight's meeting and how excited she is to see all the students' hard work across the schools. She also gave special thanks to the Department Heads as well as the Principals, Assistant Principals, and Mr. Keaney, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Supervision, for putting together the curriculum report. Dr. Zirpoli let the Board know that today, the administrative team went around the District to congratulate the recipients of the Teacher of the Year award. At the April board meeting, the following teachers will be honored: New Providence High School, Mr. Daniel Barletta; New Providence Middle School, Mr. Brian Cooper; Allen W. Roberts, Miss Piccarelli; Salt Brook School, Miss Minich.

CURRICULUM REPORT

Mr. Keaney started by stating: Thank you very much. I'm delighted to stand before you tonight to talk you through some of the exciting things happening in our schools and classrooms.

'As you all know, we have two "north stars," two guiding lights that shape our educational programming: our mission statement and our Portrait of a Graduate. In addition, we now have our Strategic Plan goals, which will guide our educational programming over the next five years.

These initiatives provide a broad framework that guides us at the macro level. This year, for the first time in several years, we also introduced departmental and building-level goals. These provide greater specificity and focus for our teachers as they plan and implement what happens in the classroom.

Tonight, I'd like to walk you through a variety of these goals. We will touch on Strategic Plan Goal #1, which focuses on the balanced use of technology. We'll also discuss our Belonging and Community initiative and highlight a few of the ways it is being integrated into our work. In addition, we'll look at the goals at Allen W. Roberts and Salt Brook School and show how they are being implemented. Finally, we will highlight three departmental goals that are also reflected in tonight's presentations.

Overall, we are trying to balance large, broad initiatives with more specific, focused goals that directly impact teaching and learning.

I'm also delighted to have a wonderful group of students here with us tonight. We have six presentations to share with you—three from the elementary level, one from the middle school, and two from the high school. Some of these presentations will highlight multiple goals, while others will focus on a single initiative.'

Mr. Keaney then invited Mrs. Michelle Testa to present "Questioning Techniques in the iReady Mathematics Classroom."

Mrs. Testa focused on innovative questioning techniques aimed at enhancing cognitive skills in the classroom.

Objectives of the Presentation

- Enhance Cognitive Skills: The program aims to foster higher-level thinking through effective questioning strategies.
- Student Engagement: Involvement of fourth-grade students to showcase their learning and understanding of mathematical concepts.

Key Techniques Demonstrated

- Notice and Wonder Slide:
 - Encourages students to observe patterns and formulate questions about numbers or shapes.
- Three Read Routine:
 - A structured approach to comprehending word problems, ensuring students grasp the context before solving.
- Collaborative Discussions:
 - Students share their problem-solving strategies and reasoning, promoting peer learning.

Mrs. Testa emphasized the value of face-to-face interactions in learning, with over 90% of the lesson dedicated to direct engagement between students and teachers, fostering a student-centered classroom environment.

Mrs. Testa concluded the presentation by emphasizing the significance of these techniques in building a strong mathematical foundation for students, preparing them for future challenges.

Mr. Keaney thanked Mrs. Testa and introduced the next presentation, "3D Printing at the Elementary Level." He stated:

'As you may know, about nine years ago, we introduced our elementary STEM program. I'd like to commend Melissa VanWingerden and Denise Post, who have truly taken this program and developed it tremendously over the years. What impresses me most about their work is that they are always thinking about what best meets the needs of their students. They're constantly looking ahead at what's coming next and considering how new ideas and tools can be thoughtfully integrated into classroom learning. This year, the STEM department's annual goal focuses on enhancing lessons to address new state standards. As many of you know, the state regularly introduces new standards—just to keep us on our

toes. In response, Melissa and Denise have decided to incorporate more 3D printing into their instruction to help meet several of these new requirements.

One of the key emphases in the updated standards for computer literacy and design thinking is moving students from being passive users of technology to becoming active producers. That distinction is important. It encourages students to solve real-world problems, think creatively, develop their own perspectives, and also learn to understand the perspectives of others. It's certainly a complex task, but Mrs. VanWingerden and Mrs. Post have done a wonderful job incorporating these ideas into their classroom work.'

Mr. Keaney then invited Mrs. VanWingerden and Mrs. Post to present. Presenting alongside them were four students. Their presentation contained the following elements:

The introduction of 3D printing into the STEM curriculum has significantly enhanced the educational experience, aligning with new state standards.

- Integration of 3D Printing:
 - 3D printing has been incorporated to provide hands-on learning experiences and to address evolving educational standards.
- Student Design Projects:
 - Students use Tinkercad to create various objects, such as:
 - Bubble Wands: Designed by first graders, allowing them to apply geometric theories.
 - Pencil Holders: Developed by fourth graders to solve the practical problem of pencils rolling off desks.

Focus on Real-World Problem Solving

- The program encourages students to:
 - Identify real-world challenges in their communities.
 - Develop prototypes that address these issues, fostering a sense of responsibility and creativity.
 -

Iterative Design Process

- The design process is emphasized as iterative, meaning students:
 - Create initial designs.
 - Test and refine their prototypes based on feedback and observations.

Goals of the Program

- Cultivating Design Thinking:
 - Students learn to approach problems creatively and critically.
- Transformative Use of Technology:
 - The program showcases how technology can enhance learning, moving students from passive consumers of technology to active producers.

Mrs. VanWingerden and Mrs. Post mentioned that the STEM program, supported by generous New Providence Education Foundation (NPEF) grants, not only enhances technical skills but also nurtures creative problem-solving abilities among students, preparing them for future challenges.

Mr. Keaney thanked Mrs. VanWingerden and Mrs. Post and shared that, as a district, we don't believe in using technology simply for technology's sake. Instead, we focus on using technology in ways that are supportive or truly transformative to learning. Much of this work would not have been possible without the NPEF, which generously purchased the 3D printers for our schools. It's important to recognize that many of the initiatives we're discussing tonight are made possible through their support, and we are incredibly grateful for what they do for our district.

Mr. Keaney then moved on to introduce the next presentation, "I Learn About People Who are Different from Me."

Mr. Keaney shared the following introduction:

'As you may recall, two years ago, we introduced our Belonging and Community Initiative. We continue to keep that at the forefront of our thinking and intentionally weave those principles into many of our lessons and classroom experiences.

You may also remember that last year we introduced Artificial Intelligence (AI) as part of our instructional tools, including a platform called MagicSchool. One of the reasons we selected MagicSchool is that it allows us to maintain strong oversight. Teachers can control when and how students use it, enabling access during class while restricting use outside the classroom. This helps ensure that AI is used in a thoughtful and guided way to support learning.'

Mr. Keaney invited Mrs. Shawna Damon to present. Presenting alongside her were three students.

Mrs. Damon began her presentation by explaining how the integration of AI in the classroom, particularly through tools like MagicSchool, has transformed educational practices. During Hispanic Heritage Month, our students used a character chatbot through the MagicSchool suite to interview influential Hispanic figures. Students were given cards that depicted historical Hispanic figures and were asked to use some questioning words to go through and find out more information about the person. This activity encouraged:

- *Cultural Discussions*: Students learned about influential figures and their contributions.
- *Questioning Skills*: They used specific questioning words to gather detailed information, promoting authentic language use in Spanish.

Exploration of Diversity

- Cultural Awareness:
 - Through their interactions, students explored:
 - Diverse life stories and immigration journeys.
 - Cultural traditions that foster appreciation for different backgrounds.

Global Citizenship

- Perspective Building:
 - This approach helps students view themselves as global citizens, capable of connecting across cultures through language and understanding.
 -

The following students shared their experiences using MagicSchool:

- 4th Grader:
 - The chatbot encouraged her to ask detailed questions and use advanced vocabulary during interviews.
 - This practice enhanced her Spanish language skills, allowing her to express ideas more clearly.
- 5th Grader:
 - Highlighted that the chatbot made learning question words enjoyable.
 - It provided opportunities for real conversations, helping him focus on grammar and vocabulary in context.
- 6th Grader:
 - Interviewed a Hispanic scientist, which broadened his understanding of educational and life challenges faced by diverse individuals.
 - The experience deepened his perspective on different languages and backgrounds.

Mrs. Damon commented that, overall, the chatbot facilitated a deeper understanding of diverse cultures and histories, and students reported feeling more connected to their learning through these interactive experiences, demonstrating the transformative use of technology in education.

Mr. Keaney thanked Mrs. Damon and commented that the reason we use MagicSchool in the first place is that all the input and output is historically collected, and teachers can always see everything that's happened during the course of that interaction with the AI tool.

Mr. Keaney then went on to introduce the next presentation: "Middle School Band Creative Composing" and stated:

'One of the strengths of the New Providence School District has always been our commitment to a well-rounded education that values academics, athletics, and the arts. Over the past few years, we've invited students from several programs—such as visual arts, culinary arts, and video design—to share their work with you.

Tonight, we're excited to highlight our music program. This year, the music department focused on increasing student creativity, which is one of the key strands in the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for the Arts. While creativity is often integrated into many art forms, it can be more challenging to incorporate into music instruction. I want to commend the music department for addressing this by implementing a structured process that encourages students to compose and write their own music.'

Mr. Keaney invited Mrs. Brittany Spina to present. Presenting alongside her were four students playing the saxophone, clarinet, percussion, and trumpet.

Mrs. Spina explained that the middle school band program is introducing creative composition as part of its department goal to help students create original musical works. The process involves three stages: generating ideas, organizing and developing those ideas, and refining a final product. Tonight's demonstration focuses on the first two stages. In the classroom, students work in a variety of formats—including individually, in pairs, in small groups, or by instrument section—to develop their compositions.

The activity begins with rhythm creation, where students use provided rhythms to build their own four- to eight-beat patterns. The following is the process students go through to compose their patterns:

- Conceptualizing Ideas: Students start by generating basic musical ideas.
- Organizing Ideas: They then organize and develop these ideas into structured rhythms or compositions.
- Refining the Final Product: Finally, students refine their work to create a polished musical piece.

Mrs. Spina had the students present their four to eight-beat pattern and then work together in pairs to play the beat. Each pattern was unique and demonstrated a different style of playing.

Mrs. Spina played a short video of the High School chorus piece that students composed together and performed at their spring concert. She ended her presentation by explaining that these activities encourage students to think like composers, make creative decisions, and collaborate with one another in a supportive environment.

Mr. Keaney moved on to introduce the next presentation, "AP World History".

Mr. Keaney commented that about three or four years ago, Mr. Henry and the high school administrative team were tasked with increasing both exposure to and access to AP courses. They went through a thoughtful process to determine which courses could be opened to lower grade levels and which new courses could be introduced.

As a result of that work, we were able to introduce AP World History to our freshman class. We've now had two years of freshmen taking an AP course.

These are the scores from last year, which averaged a 4.5. For those who may not be familiar with the AP scoring system, a score of three or higher is considered a passing score. These are college-level courses,

and students can often earn college credit based on their results. So now, for two years in a row, we've had freshmen successfully pass an AP exam.

Mr. Keaney invited Mr. Drew McCulley to come up and present with one of his students.

Mr. McCulley shared that the implementation of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, particularly AP World History for freshmen, has significantly enhanced student performance and engagement.

Mr. McCulley emphasized the crucial role of a supportive community among students. This collaborative environment is key to achieving high scores and overall success. He also shared that students utilized techniques that involved connecting historical concepts to their personal experiences, which greatly enhanced their ability to remember information long-term. The supportive atmosphere created by the teacher encouraged students to engage deeply with the material, reducing the pressure often associated with traditional study methods.

The student then discussed how studying in groups helped him and his peers retain information more effectively. This approach fostered accountability, as students motivated each other to prepare adequately for study sessions.

Mr. McCulley finished his presentation by stating that the AP course initiatives not only led to notable academic achievements but also fostered a collaborative, enjoyable learning environment where students could thrive.

Mr. Keaney invited Mrs. Sydney Bleach to present with four of her students.

The Trout in the Classroom program provides students with a hands-on opportunity to raise trout from eggs and eventually release them into local waterways, helping them connect classroom science with real-world environmental experiences. Used in AP Environmental Science and supported by the Science National Honor Society, the program allows students to actively monitor and care for a trout tank throughout the school year. When the eggs are delivered, students separate viable transparent eggs from nonviable white ones and place the healthy eggs in the tank, where they remain for several months before being released in May.

Throughout the process, students conduct weekly water quality testing and monitor key parameters such as pH to ensure the tank mimics the trout's natural habitat. Field visits further reinforce learning, as students test water quality in local streams and apply ecological concepts in real environments. Student participants shared how the program deepens their understanding of aquatic ecosystems and ecological principles such as limiting factors.

For example, an initial population of 160 trout decreased to five, prompting discussions about aggressive behavior, stress in fish, and environmental conditions that influence species survival. Students also explored broader environmental concerns, such as how increased winter road salt may impact stream ecosystems. Overall, the program enriches the science curriculum by promoting environmental awareness, strengthening problem-solving skills, and aligning with NGSS and AP Environmental Science standards through meaningful, hands-on conservation learning.

In addition to the Trout in the Classroom program in AP Environmental Science, students have recently begun an energy unit that examines the solar panel system installed at the high school. Using both historical and daily data on energy production, along with the school's overall energy usage, students are analyzing whether New Providence should take ownership of the solar panel system when the current power purchase agreement ends in 2027.

As part of this investigation, students must consider several important factors, including the system's energy production, the school's energy consumption, and the potential maintenance costs that the district would assume if ownership is transferred. This project addresses multiple course objectives while allowing students to analyze real-world data from their own school environment. At the conclusion of the project, students will present their recommendations to the district's Business Administrator, Mr. Testa.

Mr. Keaney clarified that the AP Environmental Science is offered every two years and runs alongside Environmental Sustainability, a Project Lead the Way course. When the AP Environmental Science course was first introduced, every student in the class passed the AP exam, an outstanding achievement for the program's inaugural year. Providing students with opportunities to engage in real-world problems plays a significant role in that success.

That progression of skills is extremely important. Over the past two years, our high school has also moved from being a Bronze-rated AP school to earning a Gold AP School recognition, a wonderful reflection of the progress being made.

Mr. Keaney thanked the efforts of the high school administration, particularly Mr. Henry, for expanding access to AP courses.

He finished the Curriculum report presentation by stating that all of these efforts contribute to high levels of achievement across the district. By establishing clear overarching goals along with focused departmental objectives that guide classroom instruction, we are able to provide students with a balanced, varied, and rigorous educational program that keeps student learning at the center of everything we do.

Mrs. Marano thanked Mr. Keaney and all the Department Heads for their work. She then passed the meeting to Dr. Zirpoli.

BOARD GOALS UPDATE

Advancing Staff Development and Wellness to Support Student Achievement

Dr. Zirpoli invited Mrs. Kwiatkowski to come up, and, before starting their presentation, she directed the Board's attention to their binders, where they would find the printed annual board goals, as well as the committee goals.

Dr. Zirpoli and Mrs. Kwiatkowski's presentation focused on these goals: "Improving Staff Development and Wellness Initiatives" and "Safety and Student Well-Being".

Dr. Zirpoli stated that an important focus of the Board's work in developing the new five-year strategic plan has been creating a plan that is directly aligned with the goals of the school district. This includes ensuring that the Board's annual committee goals are aligned with the strategic plan and that the goals of the superintendent, principals, and teachers ultimately connect back to the strategic plan.

The goal discussed with Mrs. Kwiatkowski focuses specifically on goal number four: strengthening staff capacity and wellness to enhance student outcomes. It was also noted that this is a five-year goal. In future years, additional goals may align with this objective, whether next year or several years from now. These goals are designed to span five years. This particular goal was developed by the Personnel Management and Communication Committee. Each committee goal is structured as a SMART goal.

By June 2026, the district will enhance staff capacity and wellness to improve student outcomes by implementing a professional development framework focused on mental health literacy, inclusive practices, executive functioning, and technology integration. Additional wellness initiatives will be introduced to all staff members, including mental health supports, wellness stays, and peer support systems.

The goal is structured as a SMART goal: it is specific in focusing on enhancing staff capacity and wellness; it is measurable through the completion of the framework, the rollout of the wellness initiatives, and staff participation rates; it is achievable with current resources, leadership support, and partnerships; it is relevant because it aligns with the district's focus on staff development, wellness, and improved student outcomes; and it is time-bound, with completion targeted for June 2026. This goal is directly aligned with Strategic Goal Number Four: strengthening staff capacity and wellness to enhance student outcomes.

Mrs. Kwaitkowski explained that the initiative focuses on two key areas: staff wellness and mindfulness, and continued learning. The goal is to support teachers' well-being and professional growth so they can better support their students.

The work began at the start of the school year with an opening-day kickoff that included a gratitude-themed event to build morale and create a positive start to the year. Staff also participated in a book study on *The Anxious Generation*, which included both educators and community members and helped inform conversations about wellness for both staff and students, in partnership with the *Anxious Generation* initiative. Throughout the year, professional learning opportunities were provided, including executive functioning workshops at the middle school to help teachers implement strategies that support students.

Additional initiatives included staff appreciation activities centered on gratitude, opportunities to explore the role of technology through data collection and analysis, and a health and wellness challenge in partnership with LifeHive that promoted overall well-being and highlighted available health resources.

Feedback from staff has been overwhelmingly positive, with many noting that these efforts helped them feel supported, appreciated, and heard. Survey data from professional development sessions showed that over 90% of staff felt prepared to start the school year, found the workshops meaningful, and believed the sessions contributed to their professional growth and understanding of the district's five-year strategic vision.

Strengthen Safety and Student Well-Being

Dr. Zirpoli invited Mr. Ugialoro to present the next goal. Mr. Ugialoro's presentation is as follows:

The Finance, Facilities, and Security Committee—chaired by Ms. Gunderman and including Mrs. Zane and Mrs. Castellano—provided guidance and feedback throughout this work, along with Athletic Director Mr. Carangelo and Manager of Information Systems Mr. Menard.

This work aligns with Strategic Goal Number Seven of the district's five-year strategic plan: strengthening school safety and student well-being through facilities, technology, and mental health support. As part of this goal, the district will complete a comprehensive review of school security systems, emergency protocols, and digital safety practices by May 2026. The review will include visitor access, surveillance cameras, communication tools, and staff training, and will result in updated policies and prioritized recommendations.

Efforts this year focused on six key areas: physical infrastructure, school procedures, emergency planning, communication systems, cybersecurity, and collaboration with partners such as the New Providence Police Department and state school safety experts.

Several steps have already been taken. Digital maps of surveillance cameras were created to help administrators access footage quickly and identify areas where additional cameras may be needed. Emergency plans were tested through tabletop exercises with the police department, allowing administrators to practice responses and identify areas for improvement. School emergency plans were also reviewed using state guidelines.

Schools completed a detailed safety assessment developed by the U.S. Department of Education, and representatives from the Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning conducted walkthroughs of school buildings to provide recommendations for improving safety.

The district also reviewed cybersecurity protections and evaluated emergency communication systems. Staff received additional training on the TAP App, and the platform was reviewed with the police department to ensure it is being used effectively.

Mr. Ugliarolo concluded his presentation by stating that the next steps include creating a prioritized plan for additional security cameras, implementing safety recommendations, conducting another emergency drill with district administrators and police, and providing further training on emergency communication procedures.

STUDENT SAFETY DATA SYSTEM REPORT

Mrs. Marano declared the Public Hearing on the Student Safety Data System, for Reporting Period 1 - September 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 open.

Mr. Ugliarolo presented the District summary for the Student Safety Data System report as of September 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025.

We had zero affirmed incidents of HIB, one incident of weapons possession, two incidents of violence which were simple threats/fighting, two incidents of vandalism which were property damage, and one incident of substance use confirmed.

At New Providence High School we had three HIB Investigations, none of which were affirmed. At New Providence Middle School we had two HIB investigations, none of which were affirmed. At Allen W. Roberts Elementary School we had seven HIB investigations, none of which were affirmed. At Salt Brook Elementary School we had two HIB investigations, none of which were affirmed.

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

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

Mrs. Marano declared the Public Hearing on the Student Safety Data System, for Reporting Period 1 - September 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 closed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Marano opened the meeting to the public at 8:29 p.m.

Jennifer Niederhoffer, 32 Club Lane

I serve as the Secretary of the Bandwagon, and with me today is Anna Roth, who is seated in the back. Anna is the Treasurer. We are here tonight on behalf of the Bandwagon, the parent organization that supports and fundraises for the New Providence High School marching band. We would like to thank the administration and the Board for appointing Ms. Spina as the new marching band director during tonight's meeting.

Since joining the district, Ms. Spina has proven herself to be not only an exceptional music educator, but also a kind and trusted adult—always ready to listen to and support students when they need it most. Our parent volunteers, student musicians, and color guard members are all incredibly excited to welcome Ms. Spina into this new role. Ms. Spina, the Bandwagon is beyond happy to support and partner with you as you lead the Pride and Class from Lieder Field to MetLife Stadium to Main Street USA—and beyond. Thank you.

Mrs. Marano declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 8:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Gunderman moved to approve the minutes for:

Business Meeting/Reorganization Meeting:	January 8, 2026
Closed Meeting:	January 8, 2026
Special Meeting:	January 15, 2026
Closed Meeting:	January 15, 2026
Business Meeting:	January 22, 2026
Closed Meeting:	January 22, 2026

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

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Kale
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Lepre
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

ACTION ITEMS**FINANCE ACTIONS**

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

BOARD SECRETARY REPORT APPROVED

- After review, we hereby accept the Board Secretary and Treasurer reports for January 2026. No major account or fund has been over expended in violation of financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

BILL LIST APPROVED

- Approve the payment of bills for February 2026, in the amount of \$4,192,559.38.

VOIDED AND REISSUED CHECKS APPROVED

- Approve the voided and reissued checks.

<u>Voided Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Reason</u>
366812	09/25/25	\$ 793.80	11-190-107-610-05	Lost
367172	11/20/25	\$11,757.12	11-000-100-566-11	Lost
037209	02/13/25	\$ 752.77	11-130-100-130-04	Lost
			11-140-100-130-01	
037234	03/14/25	\$ 332.47	11-130-100-130-04	Lost
			11-140-100-130-01	
037257	04/11/25	\$ 657.16	11-130-100-130-04	Lost
			11-140-100-130-01	
037275	05/15/25	\$ 705.02	11-130-100-130-04	Lost
			11-140-100-130-01	

037296	06/13/25	\$ 609.99	11-130-100-130-04	Lost
			11-140-100-130-01	
037374	11/14/25	\$ 110.82	11-130-100-130-04	Lost
			11-140-100-130-01	
037390	12/12/25	\$ 277.08	11-130-100-130-04	Lost
			11-140-100-130-01	

Reissued

<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Account</u>
367660	02/26/26	\$ 793.80	11-190-107-610-05
367655	02/26/26	\$11,757.12	11-000-100-566-11
037417	02/02/26	\$ 752.77	11-130-100-130-04
			11-140-100-130-01
037418	02/02/26	\$ 332.47	11-130-100-130-04
			11-140-100-130-01
037419	02/02/26	\$ 657.16	11-130-100-130-04
			11-140-100-130-01
037420	02/02/26	\$ 705.02	11-130-100-130-04
			11-140-100-130-01
037421	02/02/26	\$ 609.99	11-130-100-130-04
			11-140-100-130-01
037422	02/02/26	\$ 110.82	11-130-100-130-04
			11-140-100-130-01
037423	02/02/26	\$ 277.08	11-130-100-130-04
			11-140-100-130-01

SUMMIT SPEECH SCHOOL REVISED CONTRACT APPROVED

4. Approve the revised contract from the Summit Speech School for student #13285 with an end date of February 6, 2026.

2025/2026 ACCOUNTS TRANSFER APPROVED

5. Ratify the action of the Superintendent in making the following transfers for the 2025/2026 school year.

January 2026

From:		
Account	Description	Amount
11-000-240-105	Salaries- Secretaries	\$ 5,386.23
11-000-262-420	Repairs & Maintenance	7,000.00
11-000-291-241	Other Retirement Contributions	14,999.31
		Total: \$27,385.54
To:		
Account	Description	Amount
11-000-240-199	Unused Vacation Day Payments	\$ 5,386.23
11-000-261-610	General Supplies- Maintenance	7,000.00
11-000-291-299	Unused Sick Day Payments	14,999.31
		Total: \$27,385.54

TAPINTO NEW PROVIDENCE APPROVED

6. Approve the following resolution:

P.L. 2025, c. 72 requires that, starting March 1, 2026, municipalities publish their public notices on the municipal website. All public notices for the New Providence Board of Education will be available on the board of education website at <https://www.npsd.k12.nj.us/board-of-education/legal-notices> as of March 1, 2026.

TAPinto New Providence is approved to be added to the current approved official sources providing publication of legal notices for the remainder of the 2025/2026 school year.

Mrs. Zane seconded the motion. It was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Kale
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Lepre
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

FACILITIES ACTIONS

No facilities items for approval.

EDUCATION ACTIONS

Mrs. Castellano, Education Chairperson, moved to approve Items 1 through 5 as listed below:

2025/2026 HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, BULLYING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Per the 2011 Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, approve the recommendations of the Superintendent of Schools regarding the following 2025/2026 Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying investigations:

School	Incident Report Number(s)
Middle School:	3

SCHOOL CALENDAR APPROVED

2. Approve the following school calendars:
 - a. 2027/2028 (new)

2026/2027 SUBMISSION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION-MEDICAID INITIATIVE (SEMI) PROGRAM WAIVER APPROVED

3. In accordance with the requirement of N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.3, the Board of Education authorizes the submission of a request for waiver for the New Providence School District from participation in the Special Education-Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program. This waiver request is based on evidence estimating that the District will have fewer than 40 Medicaid-Eligible Special Education students for the 2026/2027 school year.

MINDWELL APPROVED

4. Approve MindWell for the 2025/2026 school year, for Neuropsychological Evaluations at a rate of \$5,000.00 per evaluation, Psychological Evaluations at a rate of \$2,500.00 per evaluation, and Psycho-Educational Evaluations at a rate of \$3,000.00 per evaluation, effective 3/1/26.

SUBMISSION AND ACCEPTANCE OF REVISED 2025/2026 ESSA GRANT APPLICATION

5. Approve the submission and acceptance of the revised Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Grant Application Amendment for Title IIA funds and Title III Immigrant funds. This amendment allows for the addition of \$5,260.00 of rollover funds not previously budgeted for Title IIA and the addition of \$997.00 of rollover funds not previously budgeted for Title III Immigrant funds. Title IIA funds will now total \$28,856.00 and Title III Immigrant funds will now total \$7,733.00.

Dr. Empson Hayden seconded the motion.

Dr. Zirpoli highlighted the approval of the 2027/2028 calendar and commented that the Board is approving the calendar discussed at the last meeting, which includes three emergency closing days. If two of those days are not used, one will be returned on Monday, April 17. If only one day remains, it will be given back on the Friday before Memorial Day, as outlined in the negotiated teacher contract. If a second day can be returned, it is documented on the calendar as Monday, April 17, in the 2027–2028 school year. It was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Kale
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Lepre
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

Dr. Empson Hayden moved to approve Items 1 through 9 as listed below:

2025/2026 APPOINTMENTS APPROVED

1. Approve the appointment of the following people with the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools subject to the requirements of Chapter 116 of P.L. 1986 for the 2025/2026 school year:
 - a. Matthew Manns, lacrosse (spring), boys, first assistant, \$6,225.00
 - b. Gavin Jakositz, lacrosse (spring), boys, second assistant, \$5,336.00
 - c. Angelina Iosso, lacrosse (spring), girls, second assistant, \$5,336.00
 - d. Morgan Eriksen, lacrosse (spring), girls, first assistant, \$6,225.00
 - e. Jessica Askins, student teacher, AWR, for forty (40) hours, effective, 2/27/26-6/17/26
 - f. Lindsay Di Bella, teacher, \$35,291.00 (base \$88,227.00), effective 3/1/26
 - g. Dena Di Rocco, secretary, stipend as needed for accounts payable/ receivable work, \$26.26/hr., effective 4/1/25
 - h. Emma Fine, psychology practicum student, effective 2/27/26 (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - i. Pranay Doshi, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary
 - j. Maria Bonetti, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - k. Aaron Englehardt, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary
 - l. Samantha Raymond, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - m. Charles Cadmus, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary
 - n. Mitchell Brown, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary
 - o. Robert Dallas, substitute custodian (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - p. Patricia Rey-Buitrago, substitute custodian (subject to criminal history review procedures)
 - q. Caroline Godino, teacher, \$15,533.00 (base \$73,966.00), effective 4/29/26 (subject to criminal history review procedures)

2026/2027 APPOINTMENT APPROVED

2. Approve the appointment of the following people with the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools subject to the requirements of Chapter 116 of P.L. 1986 for the 2026/2027 school year:
 - a. Brittany Spina, HS marching band (fall), director, \$9,153.63

RESIGNATIONS APPROVED

3. Accept the resignations of the following employees:
 - a. Alyssa Magliaro, teacher, effective 3/27/26
 - b. Randall Pratt, teacher, effective 6/30/26, due to retirement
 - c. Maureen Bearnarth, data management specialist, effective 6/30/26, due to retirement
 - d. Jessica Beltz-Mohrmann, teacher, effective 6/30/26, due to retirement
 - e. Chester Parlavecchio, football (fall), head coach

2025/2026 REVISIONS APPROVED

4. Approve the following revision for the 2025/2026 school year:
 - a. Karl Kavanagh, playground/lunch assistant, 3.0 hrs./day, \$20.64/hr., based on 176 days, \$5,449.00 (base \$10,898.00), effective 2/1/26

2025/2026 RESCINDED APPOINTMENTS APPROVED

5. Rescind the following appointments for the 2025/2026 school year:
 - a. Matthew Manns, lacrosse (spring), boys, second assistant, \$5,336.00
 - b. Gavin Jakositz, lacrosse (spring), girls, first assistant, \$6,225.00

2026/2027 EMPLOYEE HOLIDAY SCHEDULES APPROVED

6. Approve the following 2026/2027 Employee Holiday Schedules.
 - a. 12 Month
 - b. 10/10.5 Month

(EXHIBIT A)
(EXHIBIT B)

REVISED UNPAID LEAVE APPROVED

7. Approve the revised request for unpaid leave for Lauren Koppel, teacher, under the federal Family Leave Act for a period of eight weeks commencing 1/12/26 and ending 3/6/26, with continued health insurance benefits pursuant to law.

UNPAID PATERNITY LEAVE APPROVED

8. Approve the request for unpaid paternity leave for Leonard Thomas, custodian, under the federal Family Leave Act for a period of twelve weeks commencing 4/21/26 and ending 7/13/26, with continued health insurance benefits pursuant to law.

UNPAID LEAVE APPROVED

9. Approve the request for unpaid leave for Arlen Mase, teacher, under the federal Family Leave Act for a period of three days commencing 3/31/26 and ending 4/2/26, with continued health insurance benefits pursuant to law.

Mrs. Castellano seconded the motion.

Dr. Zirpoli wished the retirees a wonderful retirement and congratulated the new High School band director.

It was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Kale
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Lepre
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

BOARD POLICY

Mrs. Zane moved to approve Item 1 as listed below:

FIRST READING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS APPROVED

1. Approve the following policies and regulations on first reading:

Bylaws and Policies:

Policy 1552 (Mandated)	Sexual Harassment- Staff	New
Policy 3362	Sexual Harassment	Abolish
Policy 4352	Sexual Harassment	Abolish

Administrative Regulations

Regulation 1552 (Mandated)	Sexual Harassment- Staff	New
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Ms. Gunderman seconded the motion.

Mrs. Zane briefly went over the policies being abolished and approved.

It was carried on the following vote.

Roll call vote:

<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Castellano
<u>Yea</u>	Dr. Empson Hayden
<u>Yea</u>	Ms. Gunderman
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Kale
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Lepre
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology: None.

Finance, Facilities, and Safety/Security:

- 2026/2027 Proposed Budget Update:

Ms. Gunderman gave the following update: The committee met last week to review an early draft of the 2026–2027 budget. We are still waiting for the state aid numbers, which we expect to receive in March.

The latest draft developed at the committee level currently assumes that there will be no increase in state aid.

At this time, we are maintaining a 2% surplus balance. The spending plan reflects approximately a 4% increase over the 2025–2026 budget.

We are projecting a 16.3% increase in employee health benefit premiums and a 9.5% increase for dental benefits. We do plan to utilize the health benefits cap adjustment allowed by law to help address those increases.

The final tax increase will depend on the state aid numbers once they are received. The governor is scheduled to speak about state aid on March 9.

We plan to provide the full board with a draft budget once we have those numbers and the spending plan has been approved by the committee. After the state aid figures are released, the draft budget will be updated and brought forward for approval before submitting the tentative budget to the county office for review.

Our March meeting was originally scheduled for March 12th to approve the tentative budget. However, because the governor's address is scheduled for March 10th, that does not give us enough time to receive and review the numbers. As a result, that meeting will likely need to be rescheduled.

Mr. Testa stated that the plan is to send a draft to the full board within the next week or so. Since we will not receive the state aid figures until the 10th, the turnaround time after that will be very quick. He is planning to circulate a draft to the rest of the committee members tomorrow. Once they have had a chance to review it and we receive their approval, we hope to send a draft to the full board by the end of next week. That should give everyone at least a week to review it and direct any questions to me or to any of the committee members.

Once the state aid numbers are released, the timeline will move quickly. There is a plan in place depending on those numbers. We will then reschedule the March 12th meeting—likely for sometime the following week so the board can meet, approve the budget, and submit it to the county for review.

Personnel, Management, and Communications: Dr. Empson Hayden stated that the committee met last week to review the progress on the goals that Dr. Zirpoli and Mrs. Kwiatowski presented tonight.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Testa explained that every year board members are required to review the code of ethics information and sign the acknowledgement of receipt. Mr. Testa asked that the Board focus on three main areas of the code of ethics. The first is board training. There are training requirements that must be completed during your first three-year term. If you are reelected, there is one additional class that must be completed during the next three-year term.

The second section discusses the Code of Ethics in detail. It outlines several important topics that board members should review, including conflicts of interest and recusal. The recusal section is particularly important, as it explains when you must step back from participating in a matter due to a potential conflict. It also covers topics such as hiring personnel, collective bargaining, and maintaining appropriate relationships within the district.

The final section, which I personally find very important, addresses social media. It's on the last page. If you choose to use social media, I strongly recommend that you read this section carefully. I recommend avoiding it; if you use it, please follow the guidance outlined there.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Marano opened the meeting to the public at 8:42 p.m.

There being no comments from the public. Mrs. Marano declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 8:42 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

Mrs. Zane moved to adopt the following resolution:

This body shall on February 26, 2026, in the New Providence High/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, discuss in closed session, pursuant to Section 7 of the Open Public Meetings Act, specific matters which may generally be described as follows:

- Student Matters related to HIB
- Personnel

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

Mrs. Kale seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

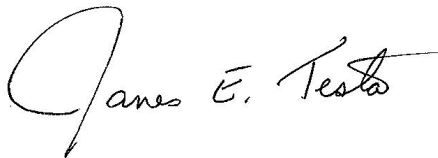
RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

The Board reconvened to public session at 9:23 p.m.

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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business before the Board, on a motion by Mrs. Zane, seconded by Mrs. Marano, and carried unanimously, Mrs. Marano declared the meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.



James Testa, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary