

The business meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on April 30, 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, Rupa Kale, Amy Lepre, Amanda Marano, 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 thirty-eight (38) 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.

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.

March

- Saturday, March 28th, was the PTSA's big Tricky Tray Fashion Show. The theme this year was "Bright Lights, Big City." The fashion show and event ended up being a top-notch success with a tremendous amount of money raised! Thank you to all who contributed to the event's success!

April

- On Wednesday, April 15th, we had an ACT School Day.
- The World Language Honor Society Induction Ceremony took place on Tuesday, April 21st. We congratulate our World Language student inductees on this great accomplishment!
- On Thursday, April 23rd, we got to meet many of our teachers' kids for Take Your Child to Work Day, which was great to meet their families!
- Also, on Thursday, April 23rd, we held the Class of 2027 National Honor Society Induction Ceremony. Congratulations to the newest group of inductees!

May

- Tomorrow, on Friday, May 1st, the PTSA will host the Senior Breakfast, where many Seniors will wear the apparel of the school they have committed to. Congratulations to all of our Seniors!
- Also, this week, the administration held meetings for Prom, HS Capstone, and the Senior Internship program. We look forward with eager anticipation to these upcoming opportunities and events!

Youth and Government Conference- This past weekend, members of the Youth and Government Club made New Providence High School proud with their incredible performance at the annual New Jersey Youth and Government Conference. Lenna Ingersoll won Outstanding Legal Brief. Achyut (Ahh-Shoot) Vinoth Kumar was selected as the Outstanding Delegate of the Lobby Corps. Ben Weinstein was chosen to be an alternate to the prestigious Conference on National Affairs or CONA, a rare and impressive

accomplishment. Sofia Gallo-Mora was chosen as a full delegate to CONA — one of only 25 students across the entire state of New Jersey to receive this honor.

And finally, New Providence High School was named an Outstanding Delegation, a reflection of the hard work and leadership our students demonstrated throughout the conference. Congratulations to all the members of the Youth and Government Club — your dedication, passion, and teamwork made this a truly unforgettable conference!

STEM Club- The STEM club is preparing to go to the States on Saturday! They have also recently created the STEM Parent Booster Club.

Student Accomplishment- Congratulations to Eren Ayvedi for earning First Place in the 13–17 age group at the Trailside Nature and Science Center's Wildlife Photography Contest for a stunning photograph of a red-tailed hawk. Eren's work will be displayed in the gallery and featured in Trailside's 2027 calendar. Congratulations, Eren!

Spring Sports- Boys' Lacrosse- The boys' lacrosse team is having a great season and posted another win yesterday over West Essex to improve their record to 8-4. They will start the County Tournament next week against ALJ High School.

Girls' Lacrosse- The girls' lacrosse team was in action again this evening against Mount Olive. The girl's too are also having an amazing season with a record of 7-3 headed into today's game.

Baseball- The baseball team currently is 7-7 with all of their losses being close, hard-fought battles. They will be in action again tomorrow at Hoboken High School.

Softball- The Softball team has been on a roll, winning four of their last five games. In 3 of those wins, the team posted 20 runs in each game, which is incredible!

Boy's Tennis- The boys' tennis team has posted two wins in a row over Elizabeth and Dayton. They are in action in the Union County tournament in Plainfield yesterday and again today.

Track and Field- The Track and Field team continues to have both individual and team success with their latest success at the very challenging Penn Relays last weekend!

ENROLLMENT

Mr. Ugliodoro gave a summary of the current enrollment. Allen W. Roberts School has 606 students; Salt Brook School has 596 students; New Providence High School has 657 students; New Providence Middle School has 388 students; and, lastly, 38 out-of-district students, for a total of 2,285 students.

Mr. Ugliodoro also provided an update on kindergarten and first-grade pre-registration for the 2026/2027 school year. Currently, there are fifty-eight students pre-registered for kindergarten at Allen W. Roberts and seventy-six students pre-registered for kindergarten at Salt Brook. Three of those students are on the exception list for Allen W. Roberts. In addition to that, there are five new students pre-registered for first grade at Allen W. Roberts, and no new students pre-registered for first grade at Salt Brook.

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES OF EXCELLENCE

Mrs. Castellano presented the following certificates for Visual and Practical Arts:

The New Providence School District is incredibly proud to recognize this year's Scholastic Art & Writing winners. These students have demonstrated exceptional talent and dedication, with several individuals earning multiple honors across various creative categories. Their commitment to artistic excellence reflects the vibrant spirit of our educational community.

Among those recognized for multiple submissions, Eren Aveyedi earned both a Regional Gold Key and a Regional Honorable Mention for Digital Art. Susan Davies displayed notable versatility, securing a Regional Silver Key alongside three Regional Honorable Mentions for her work in both Digital Art and Jewelry. Additionally, Middle School student Francesca Munoz was honored with a Regional Gold Key and a Regional Honorable Mention for her contributions to Digital Art.

In the categories of Ceramics, several students were awarded Regional Keys for their excellence. Olivia Jackovino received a Regional Gold Key in Ceramics, while Carsten Lepre and Elisabeth Pazinko both earned Regional Silver Keys for their work in the same medium.

We also celebrate the creative contributions of students who received Regional Honorable Mentions. In the realm of various mediums, Hannah Lomba, Maggie Liu, and Mia Pardo were all recognized for their artistic vision. A special distinction goes to Alec Potolsky, who received a Regional Honorable Mention for Screenplay. Alec holds the unique honor of being New Providence's first- ever recipient in the Screenplay category.

New Providence is incredibly proud of these students' artistic achievements. We celebrate your hard work and encourage you to continue pursuing your passion for arts education. Congratulations to all of our 2025/2026 Scholastic Art & Writing award winners.

Next, Mrs. Castellano presented the following certificates to students who represented New Providence in the Region Music Ensembles:

Students who excel in music exhibit a high level of motivation and work ethic to develop their skills. Those who perform in ensembles become outstanding team members and experts at collaboration. New Providence takes pride in providing opportunities for young musicians to fully develop this musical potential within the school program, as well as in auditioned honors ensembles.

The New Jersey Music Educators Association divides the state into three regions. The central region, C.J.M.E.A., sponsors auditioned Honors Bands, Orchestras, and Choirs at the intermediate and high school levels every year. Hundreds of students throughout the region, who are sponsored by their school music teachers, prepare and audition. Only the highest-scoring applicants are accepted. This year, 14 students represented New Providence in region ensembles, representing all four schools within the district.

Rah-juhn Boor, and Asher Chow were selected for the Intermediate Region Symphonic Band; Lillian Kai and Alex Roth were selected for the Intermediate Region Wind Ensemble; Maura Steed, and Alicia Xu were selected for the Intermediate Region String Orchestra; Abi Kim, and Naomi Wu were selected for the Intermediate Region Chamber Orchestra; Julia Halldorson, and Rachel Zack were selected for the High School Region Chorus; Alexander Gigliotti was selected to play Double Bass for the High School Region Wind Ensemble; and Ernest Fung, Alexander Gigliotti, and Ryan Hsieh were selected for the High School Region Orchestra.

As an additional honor, both Alicia Xu and Alexander Gigliotti were selected as First Chair in their ensembles for earning the highest scores in their ensembles in the entire region. As the First Chair Violinist, Alicia was selected as the Concertmaster of the Intermediate Region String Orchestra.

These students have earned special recognition for excellence in music performance. New Providence is very proud of its achievements and encourages its students to continue with their music education. Congratulations!

Next, Mrs. Castellano presented the following certificates to the students that represented New Providence in All-State Ensembles:

Along with regional ensembles, N.J.M.E.A. sponsors auditioned all-state honors ensembles at the elementary, middle, and high school levels every year. Hundreds of students throughout the entire state,

who are sponsored by their school music teachers, prepare and audition. Only the highest-scoring applicants are accepted. Membership in an all-state ensemble is a prestigious distinction.

In collaboration with N.J.M.E.A., the New Jersey chapter of the American Choral Directors Association sponsors auditioned all-state honor choirs at the elementary and junior high school levels.

This year, 10 students represented New Providence in All-State Ensembles.

Ana Sofia Alves Invante and Ivy Hench were selected for the Elementary All-State Chorus. Isabella Arias, Nola Farese, Raina Kamath, and Annie Liu were selected for the Junior High All-State Chorus. Abi Kim and Naomi Wu were selected for the All-State Intermediate Orchestra, Julia Halldorson was selected for the High School All-State Chorus, and Alexander Gigliotti was selected for the High School All-State Orchestra.

These students have earned special recognition for excellence in music performance. New Providence is very proud of its achievements and encourages its students to continue with their music education. Congratulations!

Lastly, Mrs. Castellano read the following recognition to student Lillian Cai, who was not able to be present tonight:

Students who excel in writing know that their work is an iterative process that depends upon their commitment to honing their craft. New Providence takes pride in giving students a multitude of opportunities to develop their literary voices through engagement with mentor texts for inspiration, exposure to various mediums of writing, and the cultivation of a revision process that treats constructive feedback as a catalyst for growth.

I would like to recognize this year's winner in the Writing Category for the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. One student from New Providence Middle School, Lillian Cai, has been awarded a Gold Key by Scholastic for her short story, titled "The Final Wish." A Gold Key is the highest regional honor in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, awarded to the top 5–7% of entries for exceptional originality, technical skill, and personal voice. Winning a Gold Key for a short story or other writing submission signifies top-tier creative talent and automatically advances the work to the national level of judging.

We recognize Lillian for her artistic achievements during the 2025-2026 school year. She has earned special recognition for excellence in writing a fictional narrative in prose. New Providence is very proud of her accomplishment and encourages her to continue her pursuits in the field of creative writing. Congratulations!

NEW PROVIDENCE EDUCATION FOUNDATION 2025/2026 AWARDED GRANTS

Dr. Zirpoli spoke about the committee and acknowledged the several members present who would be presenting that evening. She expressed appreciation for the group of volunteers, noting how wonderful it is to work with individuals who dedicate significant time and effort throughout the year to raise funds that directly support classroom initiatives.

Dr. Zirpoli shared that the committee was present to present the awarded grants and the total amount of funding being awarded to the New Providence School District, emphasizing that these funds go directly back into the classrooms.

Kelly Szeto, along with Michelle Dalring, Anna Roth, and Maria Hansen, shared that the NPEF's goal is to raise money to fund teacher-initiated grants and works directly with the Board of Education and administrators to provide additional resources for the schools. She explained that requests come directly from teachers and staff for items or programs that enhance the classroom and curriculum. She noted that throughout the year, the NPEF works with local businesses and hosts events to raise money and expressed gratitude for the support received from the community, emphasizing that all funds raised go directly back to the schools and teacher requests. Mrs. Szeto shared that this year, the NPEF received a

wide range of grant applications across all schools and grade levels and was able to fund over 90% of the requests received. She concluded by proudly presenting the Board of Education with a check in the amount of \$69,833.00.

BOARD GOALS UPDATE

Promoting Digital Wellness

Dr. Harvey began his presentation by speaking about the Board Committee Subgoal Number Two, promoting digital wellness, and explained that the goal was designed to align with Strategic Goal Number Three, which focuses on strengthening the district's commitment to student mental health and well-being through a comprehensive social-emotional learning (SEL) framework. He stated that the purpose of the goal was to design and deliver, by March 2026, a district-wide wellness initiative that includes at least one student workshop per grade-level band (K–3, 4–6, 7–8, and 9–12), one staff professional development session, and one family engagement event focused on the mental health impacts of technology and strategies for mindful, balanced digital use.

Dr. Harvey noted that the goal aligns with other district initiatives related to changes in technology use in the classroom and emphasized the importance of helping students understand why these changes are necessary and how they can support healthy outcomes. He stated that digital wellness is an ongoing conversation and not a one-size-fits-all approach, noting the importance of speaking with students at developmentally appropriate levels and supporting their understanding as they progress through the district. He shared that the district sought to involve students, families, and staff in the process to ensure a shared understanding. He explained that the district developed a wellness initiative focused on the mental health impacts of technology and strategies for mindful and balanced digital use through programming, staff research, community outings, parent events, partnerships with community organizations, and district-based student programming. He concluded by stating that the work aligns with the district's strategic plan to support student mental health as students continue to grow and adapt to changes in their environment.

Dr. Zirpoli then discussed plans to extend the goal into next year, noting that all committees will meet in June to engage in goal planning and that this specific goal will be revised. She stated that the district was fortunate to partner with Danielle Gargiulo and the Mindful Generation to implement a three-part parent and community series on *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. She explained that the first session, held in the fall, focused on understanding the challenge and reviewing the book's key concepts. Two additional parent sessions followed, one for grades K–5 focused on age-appropriate approaches to reducing technology use and another for grades 6–12, which also included student participation and breakout sessions led by district and building administrators. The series concluded with a third session focused on solutions and actions moving forward.

Dr. Zirpoli shared that the district continues to work with the Mindful Generation and expressed appreciation for its partnership and volunteerism. She reported that over 90 staff members participated in a book club on *The Anxious Generation*, with data collected after each session to support future professional development related to the mental health impacts of technology use.

She also referenced the district's revision of its cell phone policy in August, specifically at the middle school and high school, requiring students to keep cell phones in lockers. She stated that staff feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and noted positive student feedback regarding increased face-to-face communication, including more social interaction and engagement during lunch periods. She further noted that Governor Murphy signed legislation requiring schools to be cell phone-free beginning in September and expressed appreciation that the district had proactively implemented changes in advance.

Looking ahead to next year, she announced that, in partnership with the Mindful Generation and through the support of PTAs, PTOs, and the New Providence Education Foundation, the district will implement Project Reboot. She explained that the program will include four student assemblies in October, staff professional development led by Project Reboot founder Dino Ambrosi of UC Berkeley, and parent workshops divided by grade bands (K–5 and 6–12). She also noted that the district will adopt *Balance by*

Design: Guiding Principles for Thoughtful Technology Integration and continue refining lessons to support balanced technology use, with additional details to be presented at a future board meeting.

Dr. Zirpoli concluded by stating that the committee will revise the goal for next year to incorporate Project Reboot and future priorities and thanked Dr. Harvey and Danielle Gargiulo for their work and support.

Enhancing Family Engagement and Communication

Mrs. Feliciano-Allen began her presentation by stating that the committee focused this year on enhancing family engagement and communication, which directly aligns with Strategic Goal Number Five and Strategic Goal Number Six. To achieve this goal throughout the year, the committee focused on creating a strategic plan video for the community, partnering with families to improve communication, and implementing a QR code system to help support families. Mrs. Feliciano-Allen stated that the goal was specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Ms. Shadis explained that the goal was broken down into three main objectives. The first objective was to produce a Community Connections video introducing the strategic plan for sharing at Back-to-School Nights in September 2025. The second objective was to hold at least two joint planning sessions with the Board and parent groups to discuss current district communication and build consensus on a plan moving forward. The third objective was to begin piloting QR codes to facilitate electronic payments for items such as student fundraising, test registration, and field trips, thereby simplifying the process and better aligning with the systems already used by parent organizations to streamline payments.

A small portion of the *Community Connections- Back to School Video* was shown.

Ms. Shadis then provided additional details regarding the Community Connections video initiative. She explained that, beginning in the summer, Mrs. Mangle produced, recorded, and edited the videos to ensure they were ready to be presented at the Back-to-School Nights held in September 2025.

Ms. Shadis stated that both secondary and elementary versions of the video were created. In each version, Dr. Zirpoli briefly introduced the five-year strategic plan, with a particular focus on enhancing family communication and engagement. The video continued with brief introductions from key district and community stakeholders, including Ms. Gunderman, the NPEF, PTAs and PTOs, Boosters, and the Municipal Alliance, among others, highlighting the roles and organizations that support the schools. The messages also included opportunities for parents and guardians to become involved and provide feedback to the district. She noted that the district plans to refresh and revitalize the videos for the upcoming school year.

Mrs. Mangel further explained that the second part of the goal focused on conducting two joint planning sessions with key parent groups that work closely with the schools on a regular basis. She expressed appreciation to the Education Foundation, the PTAs at each school, the Music Boosters, Athletic Boosters, and the Municipal Alliance for their participation, input, and collaboration during these meetings.

Mrs. Mangel stated that during the first meeting, held in November, the district outlined its goals for centralizing and consolidating communication platforms and shared research completed to date. Attendees were provided an opportunity to offer feedback regarding the features they believed would be most valuable to families and the broader parent community. Following the meeting, the district conducted additional research informed by stakeholder feedback and identified ParentSquare as the preferred platform for school-to-home communication. Mrs. Mangel clarified that transitioning to ParentSquare would be budget-neutral, as it would replace existing communication platforms that would no longer be necessary. She noted that the next stakeholder meeting was scheduled for May 12, with ParentSquare representatives expected to provide a brief demonstration of the platform's features from a parent and community perspective.

She then recapped the district's work over the past year, explaining that the district researched multiple communication platforms through an extensive process that included demonstrations, vendor meetings, feedback from other school districts, and internal reviews involving the Information Technology Department, administration, and central office staff. Based on this research, the district concluded that ParentSquare was the best communication platform for the New Providence School District.

As part of the process, Mrs. Mangel explained that the district also researched and vetted payment gateways necessary to implement secure online payment capabilities through a communication platform. She noted that one payment gateway had already been approved by the Board in the fall, with another expected to be presented for approval shortly.

Looking ahead, during the 2026–2027 school year, the district plans to establish a committee of stakeholders, including administrators, parents, community members, teachers, and coaches, to explore ParentSquare's features and pilot various functions at each school. The district anticipates a districtwide rollout of ParentSquare for the start of the 2027–2028 school year.

Dr. Zirpoli thanked everyone for their hard work and asked if the Board had any questions or comments.

Dr. Empson-Hayden commented on the ParentSquare platform and expressed enthusiasm for its functionality that allows parents to choose their preferred method of communication. She noted that this feature would help address situations in which families may miss an email by providing alternative options, such as text messaging or other preferred communication methods. She was particularly excited about the flexibility this functionality would provide for families.

Dr. Zirpoli thanked Dr. Empson Hayden for commenting on this feature. She did note that email will always be the main source of communication, but it is great that there are other options of communication for parents to pick from.

2026/2027 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Ms. Gunderman began by thanking Mr. Testa for his great management of the district's financial resources and acknowledged the work of the entire administrative team, including central office and school-based staff, in preparing the budget.

She went on to explain that the Board's budget goals include maintaining educational programs and initiatives that support student achievement, reviewing and analyzing staffing needs, maximizing operational efficiencies, maintaining security, facilities, and equipment, considering the burden on taxpayers, and preserving the district's culture.

Reviewing educational highlights of the budget, Ms. Gunderman explained that all educational programs offered during the 2025–2026 school year would continue into the following year. The district will also continue curriculum updates and development, including the addition of a capstone advisor stipend and a summer college application boot camp program. At the high school level, curriculum updates include revisions to all Video and Media Design courses, the addition of Advanced Weight Training, and updates to AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Language and Composition, and AP Spanish courses. At the middle school, the district will complete the implementation of Pioneer Pathways in English Language Arts and Mathematics. At the elementary level, STEM programming will be expanded to include kindergarten.

It was noted that a reduction in staffing, including four teaching positions and one secretarial position, was primarily due to retirements and staff departures. She explained that when positions become vacant, the district reevaluates whether the exact position needs to be refilled or whether responsibilities can be absorbed by other staff members. She emphasized that the district continues to ensure compliance with class size policies and stated that the staffing reductions would not impact class size requirements.

Turning to facilities highlights, she shared that planned improvements at Allen W. Roberts School include the replacement of two exterior doors, cement replacement near an exterior doorway, flooring replacement in a classroom, and upgrades to the existing burglar alarm system. Additional maintenance department purchases include a ProPress combo tool, a lawn mower, and a fertilizer and seed spreader to support grounds maintenance.

Ms. Gunderman then reviewed key budget figures, noting that the budget presentation would be posted on the district website for public reference. She stated that the proposed operating budget for the upcoming year totals \$53,516,890. Referring to the budget breakdown, she explained that classroom instruction represents the largest portion of the budget at approximately 39.4 % and noted that the presentation would continue with a more detailed review of the factors driving the budget.

Mrs. Zane continued the budget presentation by reviewing a slide comparing the proposed 2026–2027 budget to the previous year's budget. She explained that the proposed 2026–2027 budget figures were shown on the right side of the slide, while last year's budget appeared on the left for comparison. Mrs. Zane pointed out a decrease in classroom instruction spending but explained that this was offset by increases in employee benefits and instructional support. She noted that most other budget categories remained consistent or decreased as a percentage of the total budget.

The proposed budget includes an increase of just over \$2 million from the prior year. Employee benefits, especially healthcare costs, continue to be the main reason for the increase. She noted that healthcare premium costs increased by more than 15% last year and remain an ongoing challenge for the district.

Mrs. Zane reviewed a comparison of spending among nearby school districts and stated that New Providence remains among the lower districts in cost per pupil, ranking second from the bottom in the comparison. She explained tax levy cap banking, which happens when a school district does not raise taxes by the full amount allowed under state law, allowing unused taxing authority to be saved for future years. She reviewed the district's tax levy figures, noting that the 2025–2026 tax levy was approximately \$45 million and the proposed 2026–2027 tax levy is approximately \$47.5 million. She explained that the district is allowed a two % tax increase under state law, along with additional adjustments for rising healthcare costs. Based on those calculations, the district's maximum allowable tax levy for 2026–2027 is \$47,458,965, while the proposed tax levy is \$47,458,710, resulting in \$255 in banked cap.

She discussed other sources of funding, including unrestricted state aid. She stated that the district expects to receive more than \$3 million in state aid for the 2026–2027 school year, which is about \$94,000 less than the previous year and continues a trend of decreasing aid.

Mrs. Zane discussed the impact on taxpayers. She explained that New Providence's total ratables for 2026 are about \$1.5 billion, slightly lower than the prior year. Based on the average assessed home value of \$311,019, the average homeowner is expected to see a total tax increase, including debt service, of about \$328 per year, or a 3.34 % increase over the previous year's taxes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Marano opened the meeting to the public at 7:52 p.m.

Danielle Gargiulo, 2 Crane Circle

Mrs. Gargiulo stated that, as Dr. Zirpoli had mentioned, she and Debbie Merrick have been coordinating with the district on several digital wellness events. She wanted to highlight an additional event that had not yet been mentioned for those watching or attending the meeting. The event, titled *Simplifying Screens*, will take place at Allen W. Roberts School (AWR) and is intended to help families find balance with technology.

As part of the event, a New Providence resident will be volunteering his time. She explained that he is a former Google and Meta product manager, as well as a data and privacy expert, and will speak about parental tools and controls, as well as managing different devices. She noted that this presentation would

be beneficial and helpful for parents to attend and hear. The event is scheduled for May 19 at 7:00 p.m. at AWR.

Ms. Gargiulo also spoke about *Wait Until 8th*, emphasizing the importance of collective action. She explained that a presentation developed by the organization would be included and believed it would be beneficial for families. In addition, device alternatives and demonstrations will be discussed, and attendees will have the opportunity to explore different options. She expressed that the event would be highly informative and encouraged as many people as possible to attend and participate. She concluded by thanking New Providence for its support and the parents who have been engaged in this important conversation.

Steve Rossi, 843 Mountain Avenue

Mr. Rossi first thanked the Board of Education and the district for their work on digital wellness. He stated that he was excited about the initiative and noted that Mr. Gargiulo had also been doing significant work in this area. He thanked the Board for placing the topic on the agenda.

Mr. Rossi stated that he believed many positive developments related to digital wellness, including iPads, were forthcoming and that he looked forward to hearing more at the next meeting. He expressed appreciation for the district's efforts.

He requested that the public be allowed to review any proposed guidelines before the Board meeting so that parents would have time to read the information before providing public comment. He stated that this would be greatly appreciated and concluded by thanking the Board.

Dr. Zirpoli responded that the plan is to present the guidelines to the full Board at the upcoming Board meeting. She explained that the following week, question-and-answer sessions will be held and broken down by elementary, middle, and high school levels. The panelists will include herself, principals, department heads, and parents will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments.

Dr. Sany Polu, 44 Pittsford Way

Thank you all for your service to our community and for the budget. I know that's a lot of work. My child is in elementary school here. We are a minimal screen household. No screens during the week, a movie on the weekend. But over fourth and fifth grade, when iPad usage at school intensified, my husband and I noticed a worsening of our child's mood and behavior. The dopamine roller coaster engendered through the use of iPads at school had invaded our home. Our child now seeks out digital stimulation in a way that concerns us. We now hide the remote control so he can't turn on YouTube on silent and watch in secrecy. We have disconnected our exercise bike, so he no longer tries to turn on the bike screen. Three months ago, we started a digital detox on weekends to compensate for the amount and types of screen time at school. Zero movies, zero video games, nothing. Every weekend, we see a transition in our child from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon when we start to get our child back. Over spring break, we did an 8-day digital detox. The transition back to our child's innate nature was dramatic. Scientific studies highlight the negative associations between screen time and brain health, mental health, and physical health. Early exposure to harmful or explicit content, including pornography, often occurs on school-issued devices. So on one side of the wellness scale, we have an abundance of studies showing the harms associated with screen-based learning devices and too much screen time. On the other side, we see an absence of high-quality independent evidence that edtech improves learning. Parents should be able to protect their kids from harm at school and certainly in their own homes. We should have the option to say no to the iPad. Thank you.

Mrs. Marano declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 7:58 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Gunderman moved to approve the minutes for:

Business Meeting:	March 19, 2026
Closed Meeting:	March 19, 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>Abstain</u>	Mrs. Lepre
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Marano
<u>Yea</u>	Mrs. Zane

Dr. Empson Hayden moved to approve the minutes for:

Business Meeting:	March 19, 2026
Closed Meeting:	March 19, 2026

Ms. Gunderman 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 9 as listed below:

BOARD SECRETARY REPORT APPROVED

1. After review, we hereby accept the Board Secretary and Treasurer reports for March 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

2. Approve the payment of bills for April 2026, in the amount of \$6,594,393.17.

2025/2026 NEW PROVIDENCE EDUCATION FOUNDATION GRANT APPROVED

3. Approve the 2025/2026 New Providence Education Foundation grant awards in the amount of \$69,833.65.

2025/2026 ACCOUNTS TRANSFER APPROVED

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

March 2026

From:		
Account	Description	Amount
11-000-100-563	Tuition- Vocational	\$ 5,000.00
11-000-230-331	Purchased Professional Services	33,389.00
11-000-262-107	Salaries- Aides	15,000.00
11-000-262-300	Purchased Professional Services	6,000.00
11-000-262-622	Utilities- Electric	4,000.00
11-209-100-500	Other Purchased Services	50,000.00
		Total: \$113,389.00
To:		
Account	Description	Amount
11-000-100-560	Transfer Fund- Charter Schools	\$ 38,889.00
11-000-261-610	General Supplies- Maintenance	7,000.00
11-000-262-621	Utilities- Natural Gas	18,000.00
11-150-100-320	Purchased Professional Services	49,500.00
		Total: \$113,389.00

PURCHASE OF SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY APPROVED

5. Approve the purchase of twenty-four Juniper Networks EX4100 48-PORT Swtiches, twenty-four Juniper EX Softwares, and two Juniper Network Power Supplies through the Software House International Purchasing Cooperative, Contract # E-8801-NJSBA ACES-CPS, in an amount not to exceed \$74,400.56.

DONATION APPROVED

6. Approve the generous donation from the New Providence PAL towards the softball field renovation, in the amount of \$700.00.

VOIDED AND REISSUED CHECKS APPROVED

7. Approve the following voided and reissued check:

Voided

<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Reason</u>
367657	02/26/26	\$650.00	11-000-219-320-11	Lost

Reissued

<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Account</u>
367970	04/30/26	\$650.00	11-000-219-320-11

2026/2027 BUDGET APPROVED

8. Approve the adoption of the final budget as approved by the Executive County Superintendent:

WHEREAS, the New Providence Board of Education adopted a TENTATIVE budget on March 19, 2026 and submitted it to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools for approval, and

WHEREAS, the TENTATIVE budget was approved by the Executive County Superintendent of Schools, and

WHEREAS, the TENTATIVE budget was advertised in the Courier News and posted on the District website and Tap Into New Providence on April 7, 2026, and

WHEREAS, the FINAL BUDGET was presented to the public during a public hearing held in the New Providence High/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, New Providence, NJ on April 30, 2026.

<u>2026/2027 School Year</u>	<u>Special General Fund</u>	<u>Debt Revenues</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total Expenditures	\$53,516,890.00	\$1,055,673.00	\$2,902,467.00	\$57,475,030.00
Less:				
<u>Anticipated Revenues</u>	<u>\$ 6,058,180.00</u>	<u>\$1,055,673.00</u>	<u>\$ 894,560.00</u>	<u>\$ 8,008,413.00</u>
Taxes to be Raised	\$47,458,710.00	\$0.00	\$2,007,907.00	\$49,466,617.00

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE 2026/2027 BUDGET APPROVED

9. Approve that the following adjustments are included in the tentative 2026/2027 annual school budget, which will be submitted to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools for technical review:

- Adjustment for enrollment: \$0.00
- Adjustment for health care costs: \$1,362,819.00
- Adjustment for deferred PERS pension contribution: \$0.00
- Adjustment for responsibility transferred: \$0.00
- Adjustment for banked cap: \$0.00

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education includes in the tentative budget the adjustment for increased costs of health benefits in the amount of \$1,362,819.00. The additional funds will be used to pay for the additional increases in health benefit premiums. The Board of Education does not utilize an adjustment for the banked cap in the final budget.

Mrs. Zane seconded the motion.

Ms. Gunderman highlighted the generous New Providence Education Foundation grant.

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

Ms. Gunderman, Facilities Chairperson, moved to approve Item 1 as listed below:

AMCO ENTREPRISES, INC BID AWARDED BID APPROVED

1. Approve the following bid and award the following contract:

HVAC Upgrades at Salt Brook School (DOAS Unit)

Vendor: AMCO Enterprises, Inc.
 600 Swenson Drive
 Kenilworth, New Jersey 07033

Base Bid: \$411,000.00

Total: \$411,000.00

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

EDUCATION ACTIONS

Mrs. Castellano, Education Chairperson, moved to approve Items 1 through 3 as listed below:

2025/2026 HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, BULLYING RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED

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:

<u>School</u>	<u>Incident Report Number(s)</u>
Middle School:	5

TEACHER RECOGNITION WEEK OBSERVANCE APPROVED

2. Approve the following resolution in observance of Teacher Recognition Week May 3rd through May 9th.

WHEREAS, the week of May 3rd through May 9th has been declared Teacher Recognition Week throughout the State of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the faculty of the New Providence School District continue to provide excellent instruction, tutoring, encouragement, counseling, and understanding to the students who pass through their classrooms; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the regular educational programs many of the staff provide advice, direction, coaching, and sponsorship to extra-curricular activities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

that the Board of Education acknowledges with pride and sincere appreciation the efforts of all of its teachers and its staff; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

that the members of the Board extend to these teachers their best wishes for the future, firm in the belief that they will always perform in the same fine fashion.

APPROVED THIS 30TH DAY OF APRIL, 2026, and signed by the order of the New Providence Board of Education.

ENROLLMENT OF STUDENT #42361 AT SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD HIGH SCHOOL APPROVED

3. Approve the enrollment of Student #42361 at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, for the 2025/2026 school year, at a tuition cost of \$7,704.00, effective 2/20/26.

Dr. Empson Hayden seconded the motion.

Mrs. Castellano read the teacher recognition resolution into the record.

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 5 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. Scott Rahner, chaperone, Youth and Government field trip, \$400.00
 - b. Gina Snyder, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary
 - c. Michael Ondrey, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary
 - d. Charles Conlan, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary (subject to issuance of certification)
 - e. Kathleen Cogan, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary (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. William Burroughs IV, teacher, \$97,474.00, effective 9/1/26 (subject to criminal history review procedures)

RESIGNATIONS APPROVED

3. Accept the resignations of the following employees:

- a. Gina Calleo, teacher, effective 6/30/26
- b. Kathleen Shelley, school social worker, effective 6/30/26, due to retirement
- c. Shayna Ponzo, reading specialist, effective 6/30/26

UNPAID MATERNITY LEAVE APPROVED

4. Approve the request for unpaid maternity leave for Danielle Chierchie, teacher, under the state Family Leave Act for a period of twelve weeks commencing 9/1/26 and ending 11/23/26, with continued health insurance benefits pursuant to law. Approve an extended leave pursuant to Article X of the Agreement between the Board and the NPEA, from 11/24/26 through and including 6/30/27. (Based on 8/4/26 due date. Dates subject to adjustment by actual birth.)

EXTENDED UNPAID CHILD REARING APPROVED

5. Approve the request of Kathryn Conway, teacher, currently on maternity leave, for an extended unpaid child-rearing leave for the 2026/2027 school year, pursuant to Article X of the Agreement between the Board and the NPEA, effective 9/1/26 through 1/31/27.

Mrs. Lepre seconded the motion.

Dr. Zirpoli brought to the Board's attention that Mr. William Burroughs would be approved that evening as the new physics teacher at the high school. She explained that he was unable to attend the meeting because he is currently teaching in Maryland and will be relocating with his family to New Providence.

Dr. Zirpoli stated that Mr. Burroughs was able to attend an in-person interview with both Mr. Henry and her, and they were extremely impressed and excited about his candidacy. She noted that he has 13 years of teaching experience and holds dual certification in chemistry and physics, which she described as a rare find. Mr. Burroughs has taught AP Physics C, AP Physics 1, chemistry, and foundational-level courses in those subject areas.

She added that Mr. Burroughs will participate in the district's new teacher orientation over the summer and reiterated that he was unable to attend the meeting because he remains in Maryland teaching through the end of the 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

BOARD POLICY

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

SECOND READING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS APPROVED

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

Bylaws and Policies:

Policy 1636.01 (Recommended)	Notification of Promotion, New Job, And Transfer Opportunities	New
Policy 2270 (Recommended)	Religion in the Schools	New
Policy 6111 (Mandatory)	Special Education Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program	Revised
Policy 7450 (Mandatory)	Property Inventory	Revised
Policy 5339.01 (Mandatory)	Student Sun Protection	New

Regulations:

Regulation 6111 (Mandatory)	Special Education Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program	Revised
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Dr. Empson Hayden 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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology: None.

Finance, Facilities, and Safety/Security: None.

Personnel, Management, and Communications: None.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Zirpoli brought to the Board's attention that she will be reaching out to schedule committee meetings in June to review the district's strategic planning goals. She stated that the committees will conduct a refresh and review of the strategic plan and develop new goals for the upcoming school year. Each committee will report on its proposed goals at the June Board meeting, with final approval anticipated at the July meeting in preparation for the start of the school year.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Marano opened the meeting to the public at 8:04 p.m.

There being no comments from the public. Mrs. Marano declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 8:04 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Gunderman moved to adopt the following resolution:

This body shall on April 30, 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
- Litigation
- 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. Lepre seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

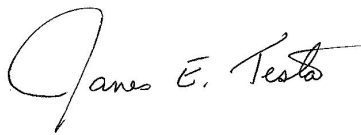
RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

The Board reconvened to public session at 9:10 p.m.

Mrs. Marano 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 Dr. Empson Hayden, seconded by Ms. Gunderman, and carried unanimously, Mrs. Marano declared the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.



James Testa, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary