

The business meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on March 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, Rupa Kale, Amy Lepre, Amanda Marano, and Donna Zane. Also present were Dr. Lauren Zirpoli, Superintendent of Schools, Joseph Ugliero, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Jonathan Keaney, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Supervision, James Testa, School Business Administrator/Board, and seventy-nine (79) 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 welcomed everyone and acknowledged the presence of many special guests in attendance. She noted that her remarks would be brief due to a very full agenda. She expressed that it was wonderful to see everyone after a very long, cold, snowy winter and shared that the students have continued to make the community proud to be Pioneers, Tigers, and Rams.

She indicated that additional information regarding student accomplishments in academic, artistic, and athletic areas would be shared shortly by Ariel. She stated that the evening also provided a special opportunity to recognize something at the heart of that success—teachers.

Speaking as a parent, a graduate of the district, and the daughter of an educator, she shared her strong belief that teachers are the backbone of any strong community. She emphasized that the impact teachers have extends far beyond the classroom, shaping students' confidence, curiosity, and future. She noted that being recognized by students, colleagues, parents, and administrators is a meaningful reflection of that impact.

She offered congratulations to Mr. Daniel Barletta, Mr. Brian Cooper, Ms. Michele Picarelli, and Mrs. Jennifer Minich, and thanked them for their dedication, care, and the difference they make every day. In closing, she wished everyone a safe and healthy spring break and hoped those traveling would arrive safely.

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.

- On Thursday, March 5th, we had our Cake Wars event for students in the Culinary Arts classes. The theme this year was LOVE, and students created our most creative and beautiful cakes to date!

- The Spring Musical, The Drowsy Chaperone, was a true hit. We are so proud of the cast, pit, crew, and directors! The musical is a ticketed event in town that continues to amaze each year with its performances. Congratulations to everyone involved!
- On March 25th, we had our SAT School Day yesterday, and wrapped up NJGPA testing for Juniors last week.
- This Saturday, March 28th, is 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, so come on out for some bites, raffles, and a top-notch fashion show!

Wrap-up of Winter Sports

- Girls' Basketball- Our Girls' Basketball team wrapped up another amazing season with a record of 29 wins and 2 losses. They again won the Conference, County, and State Sectional Championships! Congratulations to the team on an amazing season!
- Winter Cheer- Winter Cheer wrapped up their season by being crowned Group 1 State Champions! Congratulations to the team on an incredible season!

Start of Spring Sports

Our Spring Sports season is underway. We are hoping for some great weather for our teams moving forward.

- The boys' lacrosse team won its first game of the season this past Tuesday in Morristown.

Other than that, best of luck to boys' and girls' lacrosse, boys' tennis, spring cheer, spring track and field, baseball, and softball! Thank you, and that is it for this month's student representative report!

ENROLLMENT

Mr. Ugialoro gave a summary of the current enrollment. Allen W. Roberts School has 602 students, Salt Brook School has 596 students, New Providence High School has 656 students, New Providence Middle School has 388 students, and lastly, 18 out-of-district students, to give us a total of 2,260 students.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Zirpoli stated that she would keep her remarks brief, noting that the evening included many exciting celebrations. She commented that it was very nice to see the Teachers of the Year in attendance, along with a room filled with students, colleagues, and families.

She then brought to the Board's attention a proposed fundraiser currently under consideration. She explained that she had met with the Finance Committee and Mr. Testa to discuss the initiative and that the committee was supportive of the concept. She noted that it was important to bring the matter before the full Board to build consensus.

She then invited Mr. Carangelo to provide a brief presentation regarding the Leader Field scoreboard fundraising initiative.

Mr. Carangelo explained that the existing scoreboard at Leader Field has been a long-standing fixture of the facility and has provided many years of service. He noted that the scoreboard has been in place since approximately the 1970s and was originally donated and funded by Coca-Cola, at one time displaying the phrase "Always Part of the Coca-Cola Team," which was later replaced with the district's Pioneer branding. He stated that while the scoreboard is still technically functional, it has several limitations. He explained that it is difficult to see in bright sunlight and no longer has an audible horn, which can create challenges at

the end of games and in communication with officials. He indicated that these issues have led to the need to explore replacing the scoreboard.

Mr. Carangelo presented a proposed replacement that he described as a feasible and modern solution designed to address the current limitations. He explained that the new scoreboard would feature LED lighting for improved visibility during both daytime and evening events. He added that newer components would make repairs and maintenance easier, as replacement parts for the existing scoreboard are no longer readily available. He also noted that the updated design would provide enhanced branding through a new truss structure and would include an audible horn and wireless capabilities. He further explained that wireless functionality would allow the scoreboard to be operated from field level rather than from the press box, which could expand its use for youth sports organizations and other community groups.

Mr. Carangelo stated that the estimated cost for the replacement scoreboard is approximately \$32,000.00, includes removal of the existing scoreboard, installation of the new unit, and all necessary wiring and related work. He explained that the goal is to fund the project entirely through community fundraising and contributions from outside organizations. He reported that the Athletic Booster Club has expressed strong interest in supporting the project and has already committed \$10,000.00 toward the initiative. He indicated that outreach would also be made to local youth sports organizations, including the New Providence Lacrosse Club, New Providence Soccer Club, PAL, and the Rebels, to determine their level of financial support, as the scoreboard would benefit the broader community. He noted that while the goal is to raise the necessary funds quickly, the project could be implemented as a multi-year fundraising effort if needed.

Mr. Carangelo also highlighted that there is historical precedent for this type of initiative, noting that both scoreboards in the high school gymnasium were fully funded by the Athletic Booster Club through prior fundraising efforts.

Mrs. Marano asked what the lead time for this project?

Mr. Carangelo responded that since he has not yet received full approval to proceed and wanted to ensure that all the Board members agreed. He noted that the District would utilize K&J Scoreboards, the vendor historically used for these items, and stated that he could obtain the necessary information promptly.

Dr. Zirpoli then asked if the Board agreed to proceed with this project. The Board agreed.

Dr. Zirpoli asked Mr. Carangelo to stay because she wanted to recognize Mr. Carangelo and inform the Board that he recently earned the designation of Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA) through the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association. To achieve this national certification, Mr. Carangelo completed a series of professional development and leadership courses focused on athletic program administration and successfully passed a comprehensive certification exam demonstrating his knowledge of best practices in areas such as program management, student-athlete safety, leadership, and compliance. She stated that this accomplishment reflects Mr. Carangelo's commitment to professional growth and to the effective leadership and management of the district's athletic program. She also expressed pride in recognizing this achievement and appreciation for Mr. Carangelo's continued dedication to providing a positive and well-run athletic experience for all students, and thanked him for his service to the school community.

RECOGNITION OF DISTRICT UNSUNG HERO

Mrs. Marano invited Mr. Henry and Rose Stivalo up for her to be recognized as the 2026 District Unsung Hero.

Mrs. Marano read the following resolution into the record:

WHEREAS, the New Providence Board of Education hereby recognizes Rose Stivalo for receiving the Union County School Board Association's Unsung Hero Award that was presented to her on March 11, 2026; and,

WHEREAS, the Union County School Board Association, in collaboration with the New Jersey School Boards Association, recognizes Unsung Heroes from each high school in Union County. and,

WHEREAS, the Unsung Hero Award honors students who make outstanding contributions to their schools and communities that are not always recognized by traditional recognition programs. These students model good citizenship and a spirit of quiet strength that has inspired others; and,

WHEREAS, Rose Stivalo has served the school community and the community at large, and stands as a beacon to inspire others; and,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New Providence Board of Education recognizes Rose Stivalo as an Unsung Hero of Union County and the New Providence School District; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution is presented to Rose Stivalo as a sincere token of the New Providence Board of Education's congratulations and best wishes for continued Success.

Mr. Henry went on to explain a little more about what the Unsung Hero Award means. He explained that the award is a distinguished honor, as only one senior from a school in Union County is selected annually. He noted that the selection process involves collaboration among the counseling team and administration to identify students who make meaningful contributions to the school community.

He stated that what makes the award particularly meaningful is the range of criteria considered and the many qualities that can define a deserving recipient. He emphasized that there was a clear consensus among the administrative team and counseling department that Rose was the ideal recipient of this honor. He noted that the award also recognizes students who demonstrate resilience in overcoming challenges and obstacles, and that Rose has shown exceptional strength in the face of personal loss.

He shared that Rose's cousin, Brooke Healey, passed away at the age of five from diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG). He highlighted that Rose has dedicated significant time and effort to raising awareness for families affected by pediatric cancer and supporting the Brooke Healey Foundation.

In addition, he noted that within the school community, Rose serves as a peer leader who mentors younger students and is a leader on the cheer team, which recently won the group state championship. He concluded by stating that Rose is an outstanding representative of the school, expressed confidence that she will continue to achieve great things in the future, and shared appreciation for the opportunity to recognize and honor her achievement.

Dr. Empson Hayden motioned to approve the resolution, and Mrs. Zane 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

TEACHER OF THE YEAR PRESENTATION**Daniel Barletta, New Providence High School**

Mr. Henry came up to present Mr. Daniel Barletta with his Teacher of the Year Award. Mr. Henry read the following:

Good evening Dr. Zirpoli, members of the Board of Education, families, and members of our school community.

It is my great honor to stand before you this evening to recognize an extraordinary educator, a dedicated colleague, and a truly remarkable individual, our New Providence High School Teacher of the Year, Dan Barletta.

This recognition comes as no surprise to those who know him. Mr. Barletta embodies what it means to be an outstanding educator. He consistently goes above and beyond for our students, school, and district, dedicating countless hours both inside and outside the classroom and in his workshop. His passion, commitment, and care for others are evident in everything he does. Mr. Barletta was nominated by both students and his colleagues for this award, speaking to the impact he has in our school.

In the classroom, Mr. Barletta inspires students through his teaching of Tech and Construction, Advanced Tech and Construction, and Tech and Design Process. He challenges students to think critically, solve problems creatively, and take pride in their work. The skills he teaches his students will serve them well far beyond their time in our school. He has also transformed his classroom into a woodshop that feels like a home for his students; a place where they are supported, inspired, and empowered to accomplish tremendous projects. In fact, one student wrote, "Mr. Barletta is very nice and welcoming. He always teaches us in an encouraging way, where he lifts us while also pushing us further to progress and become better. He also engages you in a way that ensures you have fun and look forward to coming to his class each day. In my opinion, he is the ideal teacher."

Mr. Barletta's impact does not stop when the bell rings, however. He is deeply involved in student life, serving as advisor to multiple clubs that provide meaningful opportunities for engagement and growth for our students. Through the STEM Club, Industrial Arts Club, Dungeons and Dragons Club, and Magic: The Gathering Club, he creates inclusive spaces where students can explore their interests, build friendships, and develop confidence.

Mr. Barletta's commitment to hands-on learning and real-world application is truly exceptional. He guides students in designing and building a trebuchet for the Annual Pumpkin Sling at Picatinny Arsenal, and supports students' participation in the UCNJ Bridge Building Competition, where they design and construct model bridges. These experiences bring learning to life and leave lasting impressions on our students. He also plays a vital role in showcasing student achievement and creativity. Mr. Barletta assists students in preparing and submitting work for Youth Art Month displays in local New Providence businesses, contributes to the Annual Arts Festival, and helps produce work for the Board of Education recognition displays in our art galleries and exhibits.

Additionally, he supports student participation in NJTSA competition events, working closely with colleagues and students to ensure their success. He is also an enthusiastic supporter of STEM League competitions and TEAMS, continually encouraging students to challenge themselves and excel.

His dedication to students is also evident on the athletic field. As a coach for Football, Winter Track and Field, Spring Track and Field, and previously assisting with Basketball, he instills teamwork, discipline, and perseverance in our student-athletes.

Beyond all of these contributions, what truly sets Mr. Barletta apart is who he is as a person. He is a caring, compassionate educator who builds strong relationships with students and colleagues alike. He is always willing to lend a hand, share his expertise, and support those around him.

And while he gives so much to our school community, he is also devoted to his family. He is a proud husband to Kim and a loving father to his daughter, Evelyn, roles that undoubtedly inspire the kindness, patience, and dedication he brings to his work each day.

Dan, your passion, generosity, and unwavering commitment make a lasting difference in the lives of our students and in the strength of our NPHS school community. We are incredibly fortunate to have you as part of our district.

On behalf of the Board of Education and the entire school community, it is my privilege to congratulate you as our 25-26 NPHS Teacher of the Year!

Brian Cooper, New Providence Middle School

Mr. Criscitello came up to present Mr. Brian Cooper with his Teacher of the Year Award. Mr. Criscitello read the following:

Good evening, Dr. Zirpoli and members of the Board of Education.

This evening, I have the pleasure of recognizing New Providence Middle School's 2025–2026 Teacher of the Year, Mr. Brian Cooper.

Mr. Cooper has been a dedicated member of our middle school faculty since 2013. Over the past 13 years, he has become one of our most experienced teachers and a steady, positive presence in our building. In his seventh-grade science classroom, students know what to expect: they will be supported, they will be challenged, and they will be part of a classroom where they feel comfortable being themselves.

Mr. Cooper connects his lessons to real-world examples and designs activities that keep students engaged. Whether it's exploring ecosystems through real events like the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park or using interactive tools to model scientific concepts, he finds ways to make the content accessible and meaningful. Students are not just sitting and listening; they are discussing, collaborating, and thinking.

Students speak about Mr. Cooper in a way that says a lot about the environment he creates. One student shared, "He always makes us feel welcome and makes learning fun. We get our work done, but we enjoy doing it." Another shared, "Mr. Cooper is the nicest teacher I have ever had." Those comments reflect what we see every day: students who feel respected, included, and ready to learn.

Parents recognize this as well. One parent shared, "Mr. Cooper creates a warm, positive classroom environment where students feel supported and respected. His kindness allows students to develop independence and confidence in their learning."

And, of course, Mr. Cooper is known to incorporate humor through his signature "scientific dad jokes," which make their annual return with each new group of students. Some fan favorites include: "Do I have any jokes about sodium? Na..." or making fun-guy jokes when teaching about fungi. This is exactly what makes learning engaging and memorable in Mr. Cooper's class.

Colleagues consistently describe Mr. Cooper as someone who is dependable, collaborative, and generous with his time. One colleague shared that when they first arrived, Mr. Cooper immediately offered lesson plans, resources, and support, without being asked. Others noted his willingness to co-teach, share ideas, and help problem-solve for students with a wide range of needs. He is someone people turn to, and someone always willing to step in.

In addition to his work in the classroom, Mr. Cooper contributes to the school community as Head Coach of the boys' swim team and assistant track and field coach, where he brings the same consistency, encouragement, and focus on growth that his students experience each day in his classroom.

Mr. Cooper, thank you for your dedication to your students, your athletes, your colleagues, and our school community. It is well deserved, and it is my distinct honor to recognize you as New Providence Middle School's 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year. Congratulations!

Michele Picarelli, Allen W. Roberts Elementary School

Mr. Richter came up to present Ms. Michelle Picarelli with her Teacher of the Year Award. Mr. Richter read the following:

Good evening, students, Board of Education members, administrators, and everyone from our New Providence community. I am honored tonight to introduce and speak to you about the Allen W. Roberts Teacher of the Year, Michele Picarelli.

Ms. Picarelli has been a dedicated teacher at AWR since 2002, with a few years home with her two children. She works incredibly hard for her family, and we always know what is going on with them as she is not shy in sharing the ups and downs of family life. Her students learn all about her family as she continually shares about their lives and experiences and integrates those experiences into her classroom. Recently, she was very proud of her son's handiwork as he designed and built a photo booth that was used for students to take pictures with AWR's pet therapy dog Phoebe. Her students love hearing about her daughter's gymnastic competitions and all of her success. And I can always count on Ms. Picarelli to be the first staff member to ask when Take Your Child to Work Day is, as it is one of her favorites. That's because it is when her own kids and her school kids are all in the same place for one very special day. Ms. Picarelli brings the same love and compassion that she has for her own children to school for her students - they really are her own.

During her time at AWR, Ms. Picarelli has taught first grade, second grade, third grade, and the STEM club. For many years, she worked in the co-teaching room alongside her friend and colleague, Mrs. Cortese. They made an excellent pair and became a model for what true co-teaching is and how it can enhance the learning for all students. This year, they went in new directions, and Ms. Picarelli stayed in first grade as the general education teacher, working on her own. She will be the first to tell you that she has enjoyed this change and has renewed appreciation for the challenges of a one-teacher classroom.

Ms. Picarelli is an expert teacher and has tremendous knowledge of the developmental needs of students, especially those in the first grade. She understands the curriculum, district instructional programs, and effective teaching methodology. She has become adept with the iReady and Sonday programs, but it is her relationships with her students and the classroom environment that make her so effective and loved by so many. One parent noted, "Ms. Picarelli exemplifies everything a parent could hope for in a first-grade teacher! I have seen firsthand how she creates a warm, supportive classroom where the students feel valued, confident, and excited to learn. Through her encouragement and care, she fosters a genuine love of learning in all students." Other parents and colleagues share that her classroom is one where every student feels seen, valued, and capable. She is very encouraging, extremely patient, and runs a classroom that is full of kindness and respect.

Mrs. Picarelli is well-known throughout the current and past AWR school community. Given her years of experience, she has strong relationships with many parents and former students. A parent of a current student stated, "My older daughter also had Ms. Picarelli and still wants to go back and visit with her. She has such a positive impact on her students, both present and past! Another parent shared how, at pick up every day, there are numerous former students who walk past her classroom looking for hugs due to the lasting impression she left on them.

Mrs. Picarelli has a personality and exuberance that is contagious...and certainly heard all around the halls at AWR. She has energy and enthusiasm and is never afraid to share what is happening or what she needs with her colleagues, especially her administrators. It is said that she has a direct line to me at all times, weekends included. While other staff members might need to take a number, waiting does not apply to Ms. Picarelli. When she has a need, we will always discuss it immediately. I laugh about how often she

visits, calls, or texts, but what is true is her willingness to work collaboratively to solve problems, all in an effort to help her students. She will often be in tears in my office about the needs of a student and how she feels we need to help her or him more. She is regularly in the cafeteria helping her students get the food that they need, or to help them sit with a friend, or to check on someone who was having a tough morning.

Last week, Ms. Picarelli was unable to attend the first-grade field trip due to a personal matter. I, along with some colleagues, heard from Ms. Picarelli numerous times the night before as she wrestled with not being able to attend, and while wanting to ensure her students had a great and safe experience. While everything worked out and her students enjoyed the trip, she was later in tears about not being able to attend with them. This shows the true love and dedication she has for them every single day, even on days when her own family comes first.

Michele, the words thank you from me are really not enough to cover all of the thank yous that the students, parents, and teachers of this community have for you. The impact that you have had on so many people cannot be truly measured, and the relationships that you have developed with the people in this community are treasured in our big, extended family. Congratulations!

Jennifer Minich, Salt Brook Elementary School

Mrs. Feliciano Allen came up to present Ms. Jennifer Minich with her Teacher of the Year Award. Mrs. Feliciano Allen read the following:

Good Evening! It is truly an honor to stand before you today to recognize our Teacher of the Year, Ms. Minich.

Ms. Minich has dedicated herself to this district for 35 years, shaping the lives of countless students and leaving a lasting impact on our school community. Her commitment to teaching extends far beyond delivering lessons...she creates a classroom environment where students feel supported, valued, and inspired to learn every day.

When I first started in this district as a 4th-grade teacher, I remember always admiring the first-grade team. There was something special about their commitment to their students and their strong sense of collaboration. They worked together seamlessly, always putting students first and supporting one another in a way that truly stood out. Ms. Minich has been an integral part of that team for many years, and she exemplifies everything that makes that group so exceptional.

What truly sets Ms. Minich apart is her willingness to step in and lend a hand whenever it's needed. No matter the situation, she is someone you can count on, whether it's supporting a colleague, mentoring others, or doing whatever it takes to ensure students are successful. Just the other day, during morning arrival, I saw her outside assisting a first-grade student and naturally assumed the student was hers, only to find out the student actually belonged to a colleague. It was one of those moments that perfectly captures who she is: she doesn't just take care of "her" students, she takes care of all students, no questions asked.

Her impact reaches far beyond her own classroom. Ms. Minich is a role model, a collaborator, and a steady, positive presence in our school. She leads not only through her words but through her actions, demonstrating every day what it means to be a dedicated educator.

Ms. Minich, your kindness, your dedication, and your unwavering commitment to your students and colleagues do not go unnoticed. You are deeply respected and appreciated by everyone in this community. It is with great pride that we celebrate you today. Congratulations on being named Teacher of the Year...this recognition is so well deserved! And as an added joy, we are thrilled to share that her daughter, Tessa Minich, has recently been hired as a long-term substitute at Roberts. What a wonderful reflection of the passion for education that clearly runs in your family!

Congratulations, Ms. Minich. We are so proud of you, and so grateful for all that you do. Last, but certainly not least, I am happy to announce that we have some special friends here tonight to honor Ms. Minich and celebrate this well-deserved recognition together.

Ms. Minich's students took turns reading parts of the following poem:

Ms. Minich, you are the best,
You help us learn and never rest.

In a room full of magic and a heart full of grace,
You've made first grade such a wonderful place.

A golden star in every way,
You guide our minds in school each day.

You show us how to read and write,
To try our best and do what's right.

From little words to stories tall,
You cheer us on and help us all.

From math to crafts, through giggles and glue,
The best kind of lessons are from you.

We learn, we grow, we laugh, we play,
We can't wait to come back to school each day.

The Salt Box Museum, and Traditions too
We learn and grow because of you.

So, Ms. Minich, this one's for you
For all you give and all you do,

HIP HIP HOORAY! For all to cheer
Salt Brook's very own Teacher of the Year!

BOARD GOALS UPDATE

Develop a Fiscally Responsible & Sustainable School Budget

Mr. Testa and Mr. Henry presented the following board goal update:

Mr. Testa began the presentation by reviewing the Finance, Facilities, and Safety & Security Committee's SMART Goal #1, which focuses on developing a fiscally responsible and sustainable school budget aligned with Strategic Goals 6 and 7. By April 2026, the Committee will develop and recommend a fiscally responsible school district budget that remains within the state-mandated tax levy cap while maintaining support for core instructional programs, student services, and strategic priorities.

In parallel, the Committee will identify long-term budgeting strategies to prepare for future scenarios in which remaining within the state tax levy cap may not be feasible. Additionally, the Committee will strategically allocate any remaining bond referendum funds toward infrastructure improvements that align with district priorities. This goal meets all elements of a SMART goal and has a target completion date of April 30, 2026.

Mr. Henry reported that the subcommittee began planning during the summer and early in the school year. Five key action steps were identified as part of the budget development process. The first action step focused on providing training for new administrators and department heads who had not previously

participated in the budget process. He emphasized the importance of early planning, noting that while the budget is developed for a future school year—in this case, the 2026–2027 school year—the preparation must begin at the start of the current school year in accordance with established timelines.

The second action step involved the formal submission of budget requests at the beginning of December. The third action step centered on the ongoing collaborative review process among school administration, faculty, staff, and district administration. This process includes evaluating wants versus needs, reviewing school enrollment trends, analyzing class sizes, considering course offerings and student interest, and assessing personnel changes such as retirements. He stated that staffing changes may provide opportunities to reallocate resources effectively, rather than immediately filling positions, to fully utilize available resources across both the school and district.

The fourth action step addressed the review of remaining bond referendum funds and the identification of priority infrastructure needs across the district. School and district administration collaboratively evaluate potential uses for these funds before presenting recommendations to the Board committee. The fifth and final action step, which remains ongoing, involves continued research and review of potential future bond referendum considerations. He also noted that, based on the development of the proposed 2026–2027 budget, the district does not anticipate exceeding the tax levy cap for the upcoming school year. He further reported that significant progress has been made across all action steps leading up to the current meeting. With respect to training, approximately 50% of the district's principals are new to their roles, including Mr. Criscitello and Mrs. Feliciano Allen, and the district also welcomed five new department heads this year, representing more than half of the department leadership team. District and school administrators, including the Director of Curriculum and other administrative leaders, worked closely with these new team members to ensure they were fully prepared to participate in the budget development process.

Regarding the December submission timeline, he confirmed that all required budget submissions were completed in compliance with established deadlines. These submissions included building-level budgets developed by principals, program and curriculum-related budgets prepared by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and technology-related budget requests submitted by the Technology Department. Mr. Henry outlined the review process that follows submission. Building-level budgets are first reviewed at the school level before being submitted to district administration. District administration then conducts a comprehensive review and forwards recommendations to the appropriate Board committee. The Board committee reviews the materials and, upon approval, forwards the proposed budget to the full Board of Education. He reported that the proposed budget has most recently been submitted to the Department of Education County Office for final review and approval, and the district is currently awaiting feedback from the County Office.

Mr. Testa then provided some clarification regarding recent legislation related to seeking voter approval for funding that exceeds the 2% tax levy cap. It was noted that the district's current budget remains within state cap regulations due to allowable health benefits cap adjustments; therefore, a second budget question is not required at this time. He further explained that the new legislation allows districts to seek voter approval in November for additional funding for the following year's budget if remaining within the cap would limit necessary programs and services. While this is not anticipated for the current cycle, the provision will be incorporated into future budget planning and requires earlier long-term planning. He also provided an update on remaining bond referendum funds. Initial projects are nearing completion and are currently in the punch-list stage. After calculating and reserving the required arbitrage rebate in compliance with federal regulations, the district identified remaining funds for additional capital improvements. Mr. Testa explained and gave an example of arbitrage. Schools submitted priority lists identifying outstanding HVAC needs, primarily in gymnasiums and cafeterias. Following two rounds of bidding due to initially high costs, the district awarded a contract for HVAC upgrades to the high school gymnasium. Work is expected to begin during spring break, with completion anticipated by the end of summer 2026.

Mr. Testa noted that upon completion of this project, referendum-funded work will be substantially concluded, and any minimal remaining balance will be returned to taxpayers as tax relief in a future

budget. Overall, the district remains on track to meet its goal by April 30, 2026, and remains in a strong financial position.

Ms. Gunderman commented that on behalf of the finance and facilities committee, as well as on behalf of the board want to thank our administrators, our school administrators, and district administrators for all of their due diligence in putting the budget together, and being fiscally responsible and all that you do, particularly Mr. Testa.

Academic and Behavioral Focus

Mr. Criscitello and Ms. Wittenberg presented the following board goal update:

Mr. Criscitello began by explaining that by June 2026, the middle school leadership team aims to implement a data-informed intervention plan to reduce discipline referrals among special education and at-risk students by 40 percent. The plan also seeks to strengthen classroom environments through consistent routines and relationship-building strategies in at least 75 percent of observed classrooms. Progress will be monitored through quarterly data reviews and analysis of behavioral trends to help close achievement gaps across learner subgroups.

Mr. Criscitello noted that this work aligns with Strategic Plan goals related to strengthening data-informed instructional practices, supporting student mental health and well-being, and enhancing staff capacity to improve student outcomes.

He explained that the team identified the transition from sixth to seventh grade as one of the most challenging periods for students, as they move from a familiar environment to a new building with increased academic rigor, more teachers, and higher expectations. In response, the middle school prioritized creating predictable learning environments to support student success both academically and behaviorally.

To support this effort, staff were trained on a resource guide to ensure consistent classroom practices and expectations across settings. The school also increased its focus on executive functioning, providing professional development and instructional support to help teachers better meet students' needs. Additionally, the middle school partnered with the New Providence Education Foundation to offer an after-school program focused on executive functioning skills. The school also launched a new basic skills intervention program, Pioneer Pathways to Excellence, to provide targeted support for Tier 3 at-risk students, in addition to existing support programs.

Mr. Criscitello concluded by noting that, alongside these academic initiatives, the middle school has implemented several strategies to further strengthen students' behavioral experiences.

Ms. Wittenberg shared that, upon assuming the role of Assistant Principal at the middle school, she recognized opportunities to improve the overall school environment. She noted that the district engaged a company, US², to conduct an audit of all school buildings, which resulted in an equity landscape report for the middle school outlining areas for improvement to support a more equitable environment for students. This information, combined with annual district school climate survey data from students and staff, informed the development of the middle school's Belonging and Community goal.

Ms. Wittenberg explained that, in collaboration with Mr. Henry, the goal focused on establishing clear behavior guidelines, interventions, and consequences to be consistently implemented by teachers and administrators. To support this work, they formed a Belonging and Community subcommittee composed of staff members and counselors.

The subcommittee conducted a review of the school's Code of Conduct and gathered feedback from staff through surveys to identify the types of infractions occurring, where they were most frequently observed, and the times of day they were most common. This information, along with discipline data, guided the committee's efforts.

As part of the initiative, the committee increased signage throughout the building to reinforce expected student behaviors in classrooms, hallways, the media center, and the cafeteria. Staff also received training on effective parent communication to strengthen partnerships between families and teachers in reinforcing positive student behavior.

Ms. Wittenberg reported that the committee began revising the Code of Conduct and developed a reference guide outlining staff responsibilities and procedures when addressing student infractions. Training was provided to ensure consistent implementation of the guide. She further noted that the district's cell phone policy has had a significant positive impact on student behavior this school year. Additionally, the introduction of recess and expanded homeroom color team activities has provided students with increased opportunities for social interaction, movement, and community-building throughout the school day.

Mr. Criscitello expressed his appreciation for Mr. Henry, former principal of the middle school, recognizing the foundational work completed through the Belonging and Community subcommittee. He noted that the planning, preparation, and development of resources led by Mr. Henry and the team last year were critical to the successful implementation of initiatives during the current school year. Mr. Criscitello emphasized that the school's current progress would not have been possible without their leadership and the collaborative efforts of staff.

Mr. Criscitello then provided an update on current data trends. He reported that, when comparing the first semester of the current school year (marking periods one and two) to the same period last year, disciplinary infractions decreased from 110 to 43, representing a reduction of more than 60 percent. He further explained that the administration continues to monitor repeat infractions as an important measure of the effectiveness of interventions, noting positive progress in reducing repeat offenses. Additional data also showed decreases across multiple disciplinary measures, including lunch detentions, administrative detentions, and suspensions.

Mr. Criscitello also shared classroom observation data related to the district's instructional framework, specifically Domain 3, which focuses on classroom management and environment. He reported that 95.8 percent of staff were rated effective or highly effective in establishing clear expectations and procedures, while 98.6 percent were rated effective or highly effective in demonstrating consistent and appropriate classroom management. He emphasized that consistency across classrooms has been a key factor in supporting positive student behavior.

Mr. Criscitello concluded by noting that, beyond the quantitative data, there has been a noticeable shift in school culture. Based on his experience as both assistant principal and now principal, he observed that students are responding positively to the programs and consistent expectations implemented this year. He expressed appreciation to the teaching staff for their commitment, collaboration, and strong support of these initiatives, and stated that he looks forward to continuing to build on this progress in the future.

Mrs. Castellano commented that she has heard positive feedback from many seventh-grade students on how impactful it has been to add recess for the students.

Mrs. Kale commented that the executive function edition is brilliant. She is grateful for it and added that her kids have benefited from it.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Marano opened the meeting to the public at 8:16 p.m. There being no public comments, Mrs. Marano declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 8:16 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Gunderman moved to approve the minutes for:

Business Meeting:	February 26, 2026
Closed Meeting:	February 26, 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 12 as listed below:

BOARD SECRETARY REPORT APPROVED

1. After review, we hereby accept the Board Secretary and Treasurer reports for February 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 March 2026, in the amount of \$6,523,843.52.

VOIDED AND REISSUED CHECKS APPROVED

3. Approve the following voided and re-issued checks:

Voided				
<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Reason</u>
367166	11/20/25	\$333.00	11-000-270-890-00	Lost
037451	03/13/25	\$ 76.44	11-120-100-130-05	Lost

Re-issued			
<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Account</u>
037457	03/17/25	\$ 76.44	11-120-100-130-05

2025/2026 ACCOUNTS TRANSFER APPROVED

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

February 2026

From:		
Account	Description	Amount
11-000-291-260	Insurance-Workers' Comp.	\$12,000.00
11-120-100-01	Salaries- Grades 1-5	4,861.23
		Total: \$16,861.23
To:		
Account	Description	Amount
11-000-291-299	Unused Sick Day Payments	\$16,861.23
		Total: \$16,861.23

NPMS STUDENT COUNCIL DONATION APPROVED

5. Approve the generous donation from the NPMS Student Council, in the amount of \$99.98, for the purchase of two full-length bathroom mirrors for the Middle School bathrooms.

JOHN R. O'NEIL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND DONATION APPROVED

6. Approve the generous donation from the Prunesti family to the John R. O'Neil Memorial Scholarship Fund in the amount of \$100.00.

DRIVE FOR AUTISM FOUNDATION DONATION APPROVED

7. Approve the generous donation from the Drive for Autism Foundation to Allen W. Roberts School in the amount of \$1,400.00, for the purchase of supplies to support students with occupational therapy and speech therapy needs.

2025/2026 STATE-CERTIFIED COSTS PER PUPIL TUITION APPROVED

8. Approve state-certified costs per pupil for the 2025/2026 school year as follows:

Preschool/Kindergarten	\$15,768.00
Grades 1-5	\$17,824.00
Grades 6-8	\$16,897.00
Grades 9-12	\$18,828.00
Learning and/or Language Disabled	\$59,141.00
Preschool Disabled- Full Time	\$31,244.00
Preschool Disabled – Part Time	\$17,271.00

2025/2026 MORRIS UNION JOINTURE COMMISSION TRANSPORTATION AGREEMENT APPROVED

9. Approve the Joint Transportation Agreements between the Morris Union Jointure Commission and the New Providence School District for the 2025/2026 school year as stated below:

<u>Route</u>	<u>Per Annum</u>
925	\$15,262.95

ADDENDUM TO ATLANTIC HEALTH MATERNITY LEAVE COVERAGE APPROVED

10. Approve an addendum to the agreement between the New Providence School District and Atlantic Health to extend maternity leave coverage, in an amount not to exceed \$4,285.71.

2026/2027 PROJECT REBOOT PTSA, PTA, AND PTO DONATION APPROVED

11. Approve the generous donation from the New Providence High School PTSA (\$2,000.00), New Providence Middle School PTO (\$1,000.00), Allen W. Roberts PTA (\$1,000.00), Salt Brook PTA (\$1,000.00) to fund the 2026/2027 Project Reboot, in a total amount of \$5,000.00.

BUS COMPANY APPROVED

12. Approve the following bus company for athletics, extracurricular, and field trip transportation in the event the Morris-Union Jointure Commission is unable to provide transportation for the 2025/2026 school year:

<u>Company</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>2025/2026 Rates</u>
Byram Bus, Inc.	Stanhope	Price to be determined based on the trip

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

Ms. Gunderman, Facilities Chairperson, moved to approve Items 1 through 3 as listed below:

DISPOSAL OF ITEMS APPROVED

1. Approve the disposal of the items identified on Exhibit A, as they are outdated and no longer deemed necessary for school use. (EXHIBIT A)

DISPOSAL OF MICROSCOPES AND DONATION OF MICROSCOPES APPROVED

2. Approve the disposal and donation of forty stereo microscopes to the Parsippany-Troy Hills Public School District, as these scopes are not being used due to the New Providence School District purchasing higher-quality microscopes.

DISPOSAL OF MICROSCOPES APPROVED

3. Approve the disposal of forty-five stereo microscopes as they are broken, missing parts and inoperable.

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

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>
High School:	4 and 5
Middle School:	4
Salt Brook	3, 4, and 5

2026/2027 AMENDED IDEA-B GRANT APPLICATION APPROVED

2. Approve the submission of amended Fiscal Year 2026 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA-B) Consolidated Grant Application, in the amount of \$554,038.00 (Basic: \$533,483.00; Preschool: \$20,555.00), for the period 7/1/25 through 6/30/26.

DIGITAL WELLENESSE CONTRACT FOR PROJECT REBOOT APPROVED

3. Approve the Digital Wellness Contract that the District will enter into with Project Reboot for the 2026/2027 school year, copies in the hands of each Board member.

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

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

Dr. Empson Hayden moved to approve Items 1 through 6 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. Sean Theis, gameworker
 - b. Jennifer McSweeney, intramurals- for students with special needs K-8 (fall/winter/spring), advisor, \$705.11 (base \$2,105.00), effective 3/19/26-6/30/26
 - c. Anthony Conzentino, HS fitness center monitor, \$22.00/hr.
 - d. Alyssa Kickenweitz, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary
 - e. Adeline Celler, substitute teacher, teacher aide, and secretary.

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. Anthony Conzentino, football (fall), head coach, \$12,099.00
 - b. Amanda Srey, executive secretary, personnel (confidential), \$65,000.00, effective 7/1/26

2025/2026 REVISIONS APPROVED

3. Approve the following revision for the 2025/2026 school year:
 - a. Erin Strathern, long term substitute counselor, \$31,989.00 (base \$68,794.00), effective 12/22/25 through 5/15/26

UNPAID PATERNITY LEAVE APPROVED

4. Approve the request for unpaid paternity leave for Matthew Manns, teacher, under the state Family Leave Act for a period of twelve weeks commencing 11/30/26 and ending 3/2/27, with continued health insurance benefits pursuant to law. (Based on 5/27/26 due date. Dates subject to adjustment by actual birth.)

UNPAID MATERNITY LEAVE APPROVED

5. Approve the request for unpaid maternity leave for Maria Ulate, executive secretary (confidential), under the state Family Leave Act for a period of twelve weeks commencing 8/13/26 and ending 11/4/26, with continued health insurance benefits pursuant to law. (Based on 7/16/26 due date. Dates subject to adjustment by actual birth.)

UNPAID MATERNITY LEAVE APPROVED

6. Approve the request for unpaid maternity leave for Tatiana Pereira, teacher, under the state Family Leave Act for a period of twelve weeks commencing 9/8/26 and ending 11/30/26, with continued health insurance benefits pursuant to law. (Based on 8/11/26 due date. Dates subject to adjustment by actual birth.)

Ms. Gunderman seconded the motion.

Dr. Zirpoli congratulated Mr. Conzentino as the new head coach and Ms. Srey as the new personnel confidential secretary.

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 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
-------------------------------	--------------------------	-----

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: Mrs. Castellno reported that the committee met yesterday to discuss the progress on the committee's annual goals.

Finance, Facilities, and Safety/Security: Ms. Gunderman reported that the committee met last Friday to discuss fundraiser details for the scoreboard.

Personnel, Management, and Communications: None.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Marano opened the meeting to the public at 8:23 p.m.

There being no comments from the public. Mrs. Marano declared the public portion of the meeting closed at 8:23 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Gunderman moved to adopt the following resolution:

This body shall on March 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

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 8:37 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 Mrs. Lepre, and carried unanimously, Mrs. Marano declared the meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Testa", is written over a horizontal line.

James Testa, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary

