President's Report – October 13, 2026

Welcome to this month's Board of Education meeting.

There are several items on tonight's agenda that I would like to walk you through:

1. Public comment during the open forums
2. The committee's report on the *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* book challenge
3. Proposed revisions to Policy and Regulation 2535
4. The district's bus-routing process

Open Forums

Normally, the agenda includes two public comment sections: one for items on the agenda and another for items on or off the agenda. Due to anticipated public interest in the report on the book challenge, the Board has added an additional public comments section.

The first public forum is for discussion only related to the Perks of Being a Wallflower book challenge. The session is limited to 60 minutes, and If there is not enough time for everyone to speak, additional comments may be made during the final comments section later in the meeting.

The second open forum is for public comment on action items listed on the agenda, including policy and regulation 2535. Anyone wishing to comment on these proposed revisions or any other action item may do so.

The third forum is for any items on or off the agenda which includes any comments on bus routing modifications.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower book challenge

The Freedom to Read Act establishes requirements for when and how library materials may be challenged, which are reflected in Policy and Regulation 2535. Although there has been considerable discussion about proposed revisions to 2535, the provisions governing the book challenge process have not been modified and remain identical to the state's model policy.

The Board has followed, and will continue to follow, the Freedom to Read Act and Policy and Regulation 2535.

1) A book challenge can only be initiated only by an individual with a vested interest, which includes a parent, teacher, or student. This current book challenge falls within the guidelines of the statute.
2) Once a challenge is received, the district must follow a defined review timeline. Based on the date the challenge was filed, the Board had until mid-November to complete the review. Today's meeting is well in advance of that deadline.
3) The Board of Education shall review the review committee's report and make a final determination on whether the library material is to be removed from the school library or limited in use. The Board of Education shall provide a written statement of reasons for:
    a. The removal, limitation, or non-removal of a library material; and
    b. Any final determination that is contrary to the recommendations of the review committee.
4) The written statement of reasons shall be posted on the Board of Education's website in a prominent and easily accessible location within thirty days of the determination.
5) The Board will not vote on the final determination today. At the November BOE meeting, the Board will vote on the final determination and the written statement of reasons.
6) The purpose of today's meeting is for the Board to review and discuss the committee's report and hear community feedback.
7) Mr. Lopes will not participate in the Board's discussion of the book challenge or in any formal action taken by the Board on the matter.

Proposed revisions to Policy and Regulation 2535

Beginning in November 2025, the Board reviewed Policy and Regulation 2535 and formally adopted them in February 2026. Although the adopted versions substantially followed the model policy and regulation, a local modification was added to the section addressing book curation. This change generated considerable feedback from community members, staff, and parents. The feedback centered on four main themes:

1) Request to revert the section back to the model policy and regulation.
2) That the modifications do not adequately define the term "sensitive topics"
3) That the addition of a three-person review committee and the possibility of referring books to the Ed/Tech Committee constitute censorship.
4) Request to retain the modifications adopted by the Board

Over the past several months, the Policy Committee has discussed potential revisions to the policy and regulation with the administration, and the administration has solicited feedback from staff.

Today, the Board will consider revisions that reflect the feedback received. Although the proposed revisions do not revert to the model policy and regulation, they replace the term "sensitive topics" with alternative wording and remove the three-person review committee and the potential referral of books to the Education/Technology Committee.

The proposed changes may not satisfy every community member, but they reflect the major themes raised in the feedback and represent an effort to address those concerns.

This process also reflects good Board governance. The policy and regulation were discussed in committee, feedback was gathered, and the Board adopted final versions. The votes weren't unanimous, but good governance doesn't mean everyone has to agree. After adoption, the Board received additional feedback, and the Policy Committee met to review those concerns and develop proposed revisions for the Board to consider.

Bus Routing

Today's Finance Committee report provides a detailed analysis of the bus-routing concerns raised last month. This issue illustrates how the Board and administration work together and how a concern affecting one group can have broader District implications.

In response to Sanderson Court parents' concerns, the Finance Committee requested an analysis of potential costs and impacts, including whether similar concerns existed elsewhere. First and foremost, the administration confirmed that all District routes safely and reliably transport students to and from school in a timely manner.

The analysis found that implementing a uniform approach across all potentially affected routes would require additional buses and drivers, with a potential estimated 3% tax levy increase. More limited modifications would cost less but leave some developments' concerns unaddressed, while still increasing the tax levy.

The Board must balance service, equity, operational needs, and cost. Should the District adopt a consistent approach across all affected developments despite the expense, or pursue more limited changes? How should developments with similar circumstances be treated? And as the community grows, when should additional routes be introduced?

These decisions come amid other financial pressures. This year, the District increased its tax levy by 3.6%, in addition to township and high school property tax increases. The District also anticipates a double-digit increase in health care costs next year, which must be addressed during the budget process.

In addition, the District continues implementing programs to support student learning, update curriculum, build on strengths, and address areas for improvement. Next month, the administration will present student test scores, providing another opportunity to examine achievement and District progress.

I appreciate the community's engagement with library policies and book challenges and hope to see that same interest at BOE meetings as we address other issues affecting our schools, students, and taxpayers. The more residents understand the choices and trade-offs facing the Board, the more informed our discussions and decisions can be.

Closing

In closing, there are several ways to stay informed about Board of Education actions. I encourage you to attend a meeting or watch the video stream, either live or afterward.

If you're unable to attend or prefer a summary, Board Briefs is emailed to parents and is available on the District website under the Board of Education page. TapInto Flemington also highlights BOE discussion topics each month on its website, while *The Chronicle*, which is affiliated with TapInto, publishes articles in its printed newsletter mailed to each household.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to a productive Board meeting tonight.