

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION  
PLANNING SESSION AGENDA  
MARCH 12, 2019

NOTICE OF MEETING:

The planning session meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, March 12, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. at the Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey pursuant to the notice sent to each member.

Mrs. Minneci called the meeting to order at 5:16 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Mrs. Linda Richardson, Mrs. Kim Ruiz, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Sherry Higgins (arrived at 5:27 p.m.); Mr. Vito Nufrio (arrived at 5:20)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Mr. Gregory Tatum, Mr. Gerry Benaquista, Mrs. Annie Moses, Mr. Gregory Brennan, Mrs. Kim Conti, Mrs. Ann Hart, Mr. Craig Wojcik, Mrs. Maureen Guilfoyle, Mrs. Sandra Paul

Mrs. Richardson led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Brennan read the statement required under the “Open Public Meetings Act”, a copy of which is on file in the office of the Board Secretary.

Mr. McDowell read the District’s mission statement.

Mrs. Ruiz stated before we go into the heart of the agenda, I have a question regarding the actual agenda. I want to know how the determination was made as to which topic would be included on the agenda and what was the process behind it and who made this determination? I know many more topics were submitted and not included.

Mr. Tatum stated when you do the planning agenda, many of the topics overlap one another. We try to look at all the topics that people requested and see where it would fit in. This is more of a discussion than a directive issue. There is still old business and new business where some of those topics that are not necessarily here can also be brought up. The people that cause the agenda is the actual people that put this together. What has happened in the past is a lot of times we have the agenda and it is so lengthy that we run out of time so we try to consolidate and hit the main areas. If we can’t cover it here maybe under old or new business tonight in the worksession part of it.

Mrs. Ruiz asked is there an accountability mechanism for this. We have this agenda and I’m assuming these are all the great goals and issues that we want to tackle for the year but is there some sort of matrix or an accountability mechanism tool that we are going to use so in six

months down the road we can say we had all these great goals, do we need to tweak them or remove them because we already met them, add some more. Mr. Tatum stated being a new Board member this is something that you may not know, this meeting which is usually in February is more of a benchmark of where we are with some of these things. What we do in August when we have the August planning session is to establish what you see here so when we talk about goals and those things that we talked about prior to this – now it's how are we doing, where are we? That is the accountability piece of it. There are really two meetings that take place. Normally when we create this into an action plan, February is usually the mid-part of the school year and that is the benchmark time and assess where we are.

#### EDUCATION:

Mrs. Moses stated “Career Readiness Offering” – career offering that we will be getting will increase our student participation in CAD. We are currently looking at that for next year and that will come out to the Education Committee on how we are moving with some of the classes for career readiness. We know that it is really important for our students to have classes that prepare them for this century. We have old classes like keyboarding – that is coming off.

The other offering we have is theater, writing and history and what is in the media that is relevant for our children to express about. There are a lot of happenings in this world today that we need to have a class that speaks to that on a communication level and with writing. With that writing at the high school level and I know this has been brought up last year that there isn't enough writing. What we did was we went back and looked at something that is interesting for our students that have relevance for them today. It speaks to some of the happenings that are in the news, commercials, and what they read on social media. What is real and what is not real. That is a course that we talked about in the Education Committee that is being offered.

The other course that we talked about that is being offered is a black history course. Just recently we had QSAC come in and about four years when I first came here we didn't have that and we know that the part of the legislation said we should have had that. What we did from the bottom up over the last 3-4 years is make sure it was implemented in our curriculum. That is a part of it that speaks to – you say how is that career offering – because we talk about some of the architect that are all cultures and all of that has to be put in there. Everything career readiness – why do we put Amistad in math? Because we have mathematicians in every culture. Those are offerings that we are giving kids so we can branch out of that.

Do you remember when we had ACE come to our Board meeting? We are piloting that right now. Mrs. Bossard and Akua are working on that and getting mentors in our District to help our students with career readiness.

The other thing we are looking at and we are still talking about that and we have our curriculum meeting is the chain management. The chain management speaks about other mentors coming in. The State curriculum has that and it is approved by the State Department of Education – we pay nothing for the curriculum. The curriculum is already done for us. We just pay for the books. We work with Rutgers University. Our kids get credits and maybe get a certificate for an apprentice or whatever they decide to do. Those are the offerings that we are moving into.

Mrs. Paul stated supply chain management – it teaches about logistics and how to make sure that the whole concept of supply chain – how it flows and teaching the students project management. It is really life skills.

Mrs. Ruiz stated my son happens to be in the CAD course and absolutely loves it and my understanding is Mr. O is a big hit and it is a great class. My question is if we are going to have increased student participation I am assuming we are going to hire another CAD teacher or give Mr. O more work. Mrs. Moses stated that was a discussion at the table. There are a lot of things going on with financials. Mr. Tatum stated one of the things that we are trying to take a look at is what we can do away with to be able to get what we need. One of the biggest problems that we have here is keeping up with our budget. It is very difficult to add without deleting. The whole idea is getting rid of some of those electives that are no longer needed and maximize class size in other areas to free up revenue to hire another person. I saw CAD last week and when you look at CAD it used to be on a piece of paper and now the students are all on their computer and so engaged. I know why it is such a popular course. It is really them doing their best work and seeing it come right to life right in front of them. Where before it was a much longer process. There have been so many advances in technology. The teacher is outstanding.

Mrs. Minneci stated your son was interviewed. We were there in the classroom and he is an excellent teacher and the program is great. You can see how engaged the kids are the whole time we were in there. Mrs. Ruiz asked that is why I was wondering if we were going to hire another teacher. If we are they need to be as good or better than Mr. O. It would be a shame to dilute the quality when Mr. O is already doing such a great job with the program.

Mr. Moses stated we had that conversation at the table. It speaks to what Mr. Tatum said, what we don't need is what we don't need and we can't hold on any longer because the kids don't need it and they are not interested in it. If we are going to expand that program something is going to come off. Mr. Tatum stated and sometimes sacrifices have to be made financially to be able to make those things happen – more of that to come; that is the plan we are working on as we speak.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I know CAD is strictly for the high school but the other courses, especially the black history course, will that be through all grade levels? Or specifically for the high school? Mrs. Moses stated we are doing it at the high school. When we bring something to the table and we ask teachers to teach it, we want to have that cultural awareness – you can't be afraid to teach. You have to be very comfortable in what you teach. What I found out four years ago when I came to the table and someone said I'm uncomfortable with it, then I know some work needs to be done. We have teachers and because it is a black history course doesn't mean that the teachers that are teaching are black. They are teaching facts. As we start to expose and move it down we want to make sure - I don't want to teach anything if you feel uncomfortable when kids start to question because emotions go into any culture you are going to talk about. We have to make sure that the training goes in and that is where a PD is coming in. The teachers that are teaching it have the PD training. We understand to make sure the kids who are taking this course understands the course and the family understands the course. Our theme this year is all about family engagement. We have to understand the experiences kids come to the table with

and experience that teachers bring to the classroom. Yes we do have it in our curriculum and yes we do have to put Amistad in every subject from kindergarten all the way up and we use that curriculum and it had to be tied to every unit because every culture that sits before us – every culture should be spoken about in the classroom as it relates to English, math – everything and we have to move in to have these courses that will build on the concepts that we take from Amistad curriculum and all across the grade levels.

About the career readiness – who created these chemicals for hair – that is part of literature and it is also part of history. We really have to educate our children about all the cultures and all the different things and why we have what we have. That is really important and we are going to go deep; let's not be afraid. We will start at the top because they never had it.

Mrs. Ruiz stated that is why I'm asking because I would like to see it trickle all the way down and at every grade level a minimum level of teaching that has to have it. I'll give you an example. I saw that Burnet Middle School had the students do this fantastic project during black history month – it was awesome. The research skills that you have to have to put that together is very important. I'm a Kawameeh parent so why aren't they doing the same thing? My next question is my child comes to me and says how come my math teacher gave me a project to do that is math related for black history month but social studies teacher didn't – it doesn't make sense to me. Isn't that the class that you should absolutely have a black history project. My concern or preference would be that we see it across the board – every class and that each teacher has a requirement that the students must complete a certain level of course education in that subject. For example, every day we are going to have a quote by a black person in history. Mrs. Moses stated Amistad is really important and when they sat down at the table and came to this District last week the first thing they wanted to see if we implemented Amistad curriculum. The next thing is how do you tie it in. What you are saying after the kids do the research then they have inquiry, then they start asking you the same question – why didn't we have it in math? And that is what we want to promote. In order to get everyone on this same page, we need the inquiry of our children, students participation, going home to parents and bringing it back and that is how we know that is the direction that we need to go in. We know that is the direction we need to go in not only for black history for all cultures. Amistad is not all about blacks – it is all cultures. I think that is what people were afraid of. Now we have training. So what you saw at Burnet, we have two teachers that have been going to the Amistad training for four years consecutively.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I think the district needs a whole mission envision that connects to what the District believes in terms of how students will learn and what students will learn. This entire week I have been doing a lot of research on this District because I have a lot of stakeholders and interest in this District in terms of the connection between this District's mission, vision and how it affects the learning that is happening in the District and there is a big disconnect. I think unless you guys revamp that whole thing – the disconnect will always be there and therefore there will be a disconnect on what the kids are supposed to learn and what is it that we believe and how it should look. Mrs. Moses stated I agree with that and that is why we have the mission statement that we put together by the planning committee and we went all out on that one. We sat at the same table two days ago and we looked at everyone's vision statement that they had to bring to the table because as we start to move forward with our student learning

and having these PD's and you guys know because you were all here when we had a PD and everyone walked out because they didn't want to hear but it was about all children that sometimes people think it is just about one but it is for all kids and the bottom line is we are sitting right now and we are looking at our vision statement. When I say all hands on deck, all hands on deck, it is new for the principals and you have to give it up to them because now you are saying Annie you need to share everything with everybody because we are all stakeholders.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated that is because the District is not comfortable with their mental models meaning that they are not comfortable with what they believe and in terms of their attitudes, assumptions and beliefs and that is the whole thing. When you look across the high school and all the way down, the District has never had real conversation about it and when I say mental models I mean that they are probably not good, not bad at the same time, but we have to take a look at our own mental models in each of our buildings. What are our beliefs, what are the assumptions that we bring to the building. All those things have to be on the table. If they are not, it is not going to be a good place.

Mrs. Moses stated that is true and we know that and we are looking at what we are doing to help better educate and bring in equity for all our children. We are attending PD workshops – equity leadership symposium at Rutgers and it is about equity for all children. We know that and we know that PD is very important. I have to say to this Board of Education because you always say to us that PD, we want to see the PD on time, if you go back and look at your records you will see more principals and PDs than ever before. They are always at PDs learning. Understanding that we don't work in isolation in this profession; understanding that we must address the needs of our students first. We are servers.

Dr. Morgan stated Kim brought up why isn't it trickling down to the elementary schools and you say it is starting at the high school and my question is why is it isolated – we talked about being culturally responsive teaching. It is not Amistad but it is something in the curriculum should say multi-cultural connection so that teachers would know how to attack that part of the curriculum. Mrs. Moses stated we do have that in our curriculum. What we don't have is a black history course in the elementary. That is definitely included in our elementary. We don't have a black history course and that is the one thing that I said. We have multi-cultural teaching in our classes across the Board and when you look at the curriculum and you see that we do have it but one might say is that enough? Is it hitting everyone? We need to look and expand the mental of this curriculum and add more to it. When we begin to add more to it we need to become culturally aware of where we are, how we are teaching, how we are presenting and open up for the inquiry of children and their thinking, the researching and so on. We are moving in that direction. It does require the support and collaboration of the Education Committee because there is nothing that we do without bringing it to the Education Committee for their support. The support is needed. The support of families is coming back. How better else to assess ourselves then hearing the words of others in the community. Our students are our biggest stakeholders.

Mr. Tatum stated what I'm hearing here and that we have done is to try to take these concepts at the lower elementary level and interweave them into the curriculum – that has been done. That is one of the first things that we started doing with the Amistad and all the

requirements of the State – probably 3-4 years ago. There is another issue here and some of you have heard me say this before. The planning committee and I are working on it now and that is we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world but we have a very 20<sup>th</sup> century set of values. Let me clarify what I mean by that. Your schools are organized as they were in the 1960's – 1969. One of the things I'm working on and really haven't talked a lot about it – I talked with the Board President and with the Vice President and Gerry attended a couple of meetings – we are looking at a research based grade level reorganization configuration. You have to understand that part of what you are asking for in terms of a culture is that there is very little time the way this District is organized to have any school attachments. There haven't been any real identity in terms of it. Children go into a particular grade level – they are there for a year and then they are gone. How do you bring the gap between those transitions and those needs and that philosophy if people are all over the place. One of the things that we have is a highly structured problem in terms of how this District is organized. I work with a subcommittee. When we present to this Board, our planning committee, to this community it will all be researched based. It is going to be based upon the type of models that we should have in place in this District and I think for so long we have gone to the far right on that because it has always been done that way.

In an age when things are changing and the needs of how schools look now are completely different than when we work with the State – I know that in some cases some things may not be moving fast enough because we are trying to catch up with the real world but the whole idea is that there have been so many great strides that have taken place over the last 3-4 years and if we stayed where we were we would be so much further behind. You are really going to see changes in this configuration finally going to happen. You are going to see a lot in the way of ownership, family, community, some of the goals that we have this year, student attachment – all those students are going to be a part of how this District will look moving forward.

The other problem is this – I don't know if you want to call it a quick fix or whatever the case may be. Those are the things you are going to see – like the technology – when we tried to implement technology that is what we played catch-up on. You hear me talk about the smart board lights being out – well smart boards are almost obsolete now. Again we continue to play catch up. There is certainly a mindset issue and when you ask the question of what is happening in this school versus this school – one of the things I'm talking about in the curriculum standpoint of view, I think there has to be what is called a grade level experience. I call it experience and I say from the standpoint that there is almost a building block to something. In other words they are not just doing something haphazardly you are doing it because it is a pre-requisite to what happens the following year. Those are the things that we know we are missing. We have been trying to catch up and do patchwork but the bottom line is that stuff is only going to be as good as having the schools organized and what identical schools have and that is where the mindset has to change. I can tell you right now, grade 9 has to be a specialized program. The movement in the middle schools have to slow down. There are a lot of things that have to change in the way we have things structured and organized. Unfortunately, those are the things that we have been trying to get to and now we are finally getting to that point. We are at the research stage of it. A lot of research I already have but at the same time I don't want to reorganize the schools because I think it is the way I think it should be done – I tell the planning committee all the time - Tatum came and messed up our schools and then left the district – no

I'm looking to bring in something that is researched based and that is community supported. It is something that ties into everything you guys are talking about right now. While we get into that piece, and it is going on simultaneously, we talked earlier in August about this whole idea about the building that is going on in this District. We talked about the possibility of expansion of Livingston school and a number of things that we might possibly be able to do. By the same token, simultaneous process you have housing being built, enrollment that is ever changing and the question becomes with the current financial situation, how do you then turn around and accommodate all those needs in one package. Guess what, over the next year you are going to see that start to evolve because that is one of the main goals that we will be carrying into next school year. But by the time this school year is over, we expect to take the show on the road and all of you that are sitting here are part of that reorganization and redevelopment.

Mr. Nufrio stated two things – all of this is something that we talked about in the past. The one risk factor hasn't been brought to the table is as the old guard leaves or as the middle guard is learning through all the programs that we offer them, what about the colleges? I think it is important to understand that the newbies are coming in, will they be able to assimilate into a radical change and certainly I'm not suggesting it is radical in any means. First of all your concepts you described earlier is no different than when they established the CORE standards and I was part of that committee – the cross curricular instruction was the focus. It is no different it is just an expansion of that. Even though the State is abandoning some of the old CORE standards, the level of CORE standards has changed even dramatically. The cross curricular instruction is the key and it is the CORE for bringing in even to a math class – some concept of some particular special individual who had some absolute new discovery in math. It can be done in all classes. It has to be someone who is dedicated enough to do the research, willing to take on the challenge of incorporating and integrating and that is what cross curricular instruction is. That should be the absolute focus along with the new people that we are bringing in from universities and colleges – those people should have some understanding on what they can expect because we may actually not have it. They will be so shell shocked – that's not what I learned in college, that's not how I learned to teach - the approach and technology.

Mr. Tatum stated I know what he is saying. The answer to the first question is colleges are very nervous. I'll tell you the reason why. We dealt with Martha Mobley for a number of years here and sitting here in Annie's office talking about how difficult it is. The State is coming down on the colleges about teacher preparation. Mr. Nufrio stated we are going to have a double challenge. We have to set the foundation otherwise it would be like coming into a brand new room and they don't know what to do. It will be our job to go to work and give all the professional development that you won't be able to give to them in time for them to hit the ground running.

Mr. Tatum stated a couple of weeks back when there was a mid-year assessment done on the progress of students in the high school and we were there for that meeting and one of the things we talked about was philosophy of meeting children where they are. It is interesting because when you talk about meeting children where they are is a totally different mindset than some people take and what is really meant by it and that is this and I remember at the end of the meeting having a couple of sidebar conversations with a few people. They were so confused by that terminology and let me tell you what they thought that meant. They thought that meant that

whatever they learned, don't worry about the rest of it, just go ahead and that is where they are and they can't go any further and that is the furthest from what that whole concept means. When I broke it down to a couple of people and what it really means is you need to have an anthology of teaching strategies and approaches to deal with the multitude of needs in your classroom and if a child is not getting it what you do and what kind of interactions do you put together in order to have that child now to be able to start to move and grasp those concepts – that is the difference. A lot of it is a mindset issue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it would have been o.k. you have to know just the basics and that is the end of it and by 8<sup>th</sup> grade they have all the skills they need to be able to survive in this world which is completely different now. Now what we are saying is it is not whether the kid is smart, it is how smart the kid really is and that is a whole different philosophical belief. But if you believe that is as far as they can go and there is nothing you can do to reach them than you will bring that type of result. Again that is what all this PD is all about to broaden their thinking and there is another way. Going back to the CAD course, I was looking at another class next door – the one thing I'm seeing at the high school is that the level of engagement is a lot different than it has been in previous years. It does show that change is taking place. In my years of experience in the high school level I have seen students acting up and out of their seats and actively involved and practice by doing. One of the things that they say research wise that when you have those children completely traveling all day long, there is very little opportunity to practice what they have learned. That is a whole different mindset that has to take place. Mrs. Darby when you mention mental models, the mental model is of a 20<sup>th</sup> century mindset which unfortunately you are going to breed 20<sup>th</sup> century results so I hear what you are saying in terms of that. We have made some strides in trying to get to the 21<sup>st</sup> century but unfortunately what has taken up the time is resources and all the other issues but that is not an excuse, these are facts. We are trying very diligently to make that shift but the very foundation is what the belief system happens to be.

There was a study done many years ago about the effective schools and some of you administrators in the room might remember effective schools research and it spoke very diligently about a belief system – that is the very core, foundation of any successful school or organization. Now the mindset is chaos is good as long as it is linear – you heard that comment too. I think when the mindset is that the foundation has changed you can have that chaos because everyone is going in the same direction. When you walk into a CAD class, kids are working on different things – they are very focused and engaged but at the same time they are all striving for a particular goal that is set by the teacher. The teacher is striving for higher level of retention.

Mrs. Higgins stated my daughter is in the high school and there are all these different experience – can you explain the difference between 21<sup>st</sup> century, 20<sup>th</sup> century? Mr. Tatum stated when you talk about 20<sup>th</sup> century, you are talking about the industrial age where everything was done by memorization and low level factual base. When you talk about 21<sup>st</sup> century, you are talking more about the divergent thinking. Mrs. Higgins stated all of my daughter's classes are that way at the high school. I think you are probably more there than you think. Mr. Tatum stated I think we are getting there. There have been changes that have been made. What I want to get to and I think this is the piece that might not be very clear so let me clarify what I'm saying. I think that at the very foundation, there are some individuals that have taken off like a rocket, they are there already. They come with a different mindset. I think what happens is that there are some of us who just have that process and delivery. You can go from



person to person – we have a teacher who is very engaging to high school students where some people say why are you taking your time to do that because they have a whole different mindset. We talked with the lady from the State today about this very same thing and what she was saying to me was when she comes into a district I have a job to do and the job is to get in there and assess what we expect is truly going on and if it is not going on than how do we get to the point that they are moving in that direction. When I say we have a 21<sup>st</sup> century foundation we are operating in a structure that dictates old mindset of 20<sup>th</sup> century. We are not organized in a manner that is suggestive that we are going in that direction.

Mr. Nufrio stated we have to remain cognizant that not all teachers can attempt and the same thing is for students. Mr. Tatum stated that is true. Mr. Nufrio stated it will be those students that need structure. They need a discipline type of atmosphere as opposed to organized chaos. We have to be cognizant of the fact that we still have to reach those kids and if we insist that they make change than we are guilty of sin trying to force that on those kids. It has to be multi-dimensional type of instruction when you are going to have a little bit of everything. Mr. Tatum stated he just described meeting children where they are – that exactly what that means. You are going to have students that need additional support. You can't write up the kids that sit in the back of the room and determine that he is not going to amount to anything. He may be the brightest kid in that room but unfortunately because our mindset is he is not going anywhere, we leave him alone. The question is how do you engage him. Do you assess what his interests are? Why is he sitting back there and not engaged? Once in while he comes to light and you see he has something but how do we get it out of him? That to me is more 21<sup>st</sup> century than in previous years. I'm going to tell you a true story about a kid sitting in the back of the room – has his own business that he is running outside of his grandmother's garage and making more money than half the people in the school but we thought he didn't have anything going on because he was sitting back there and nobody would tap into his real ability – that is the difference.

Mrs. Higgins stated my comments come from that my daughter just happens to be blessed with 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers. Mr. Tatum stated we have to foster a culture that really brings that into all the classrooms and that is what is hard about it. I'm glad your daughter has those teachers because that means those people operate in a structure and mindset that is almost antiquated. Mrs. Moses stated at the same time as a District we have to make sure that there is equity.

Mrs. Higgins stated she noticed how the teachers was able to reach everyone in a different way – free thinkers, structured thinkers, all the different types – her teachers are able to do that. I'm sorry to say that they are all extremely young. I don't know if it is because their learned. The older teachers, I don't know may be they just need to be taught or learned. Mrs. Minneci stated a PD. Mrs. Ruiz stated you can do as much PD as you want but if it is not implemented it is wasted time. Mrs. Moses stated that is where it changed right here because we have PD. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated let's call it PLC. Mrs. Moses stated we have PLC but we go out for PD for training. We have PLC in the schools but when we have PD which the State requires – professional development – it is the mindset that is on here. If the District says we will close school for half day, it's on the calendar, the community, the parents, the stakeholders know we are having PD, you are accountable for all of us for work we are doing. You can go there and pretend that you don't know and a parent says I know you have PD on social,

emotional learning, my daughter is having problems in classroom so what strategy are you using – you have PD so we know you had it so you can't say – you know what I didn't implement that. We expect you to implement whatever is out there. If I go to a PD by the State, I'm expected to come back and implement it. If we talk about anything in our Education Committee, it is at the Education Committee because we are saying we are going to implement it. We are going to implement it with the collaboration of everyone at this table and that is where you build equity. You say to the teacher you are going to PD you need to come back and let us know what you are doing – department person needs to share ideas, share information. When principals go to PD they email me all their notes. If one goes and we are implementing how are we going to use the strategies and things that we have there to move it.

Mr. Tatum stated a lot of the PD is also turnkey because when they come here we allow individual principals to present what they learned at the workshops and share with their colleagues and turnkey with their faculty. Mr. Benaquista stated it was a big part of QSAC. They were looking on how it is tied into; it is not isolated any more. It needs to be embedded into the observations. They want to see the connection between the skip teams and what is going on with the overall observations and what PD is being supported to improve those areas that need to be improved. There is a connection everywhere with professional development and QSAC looks for it.

Mr. Tatum stated we are on #2 – we have a lot to talk about moving forward. Mrs. Moses stated the District goals for 2018-2019 – we hope to see some positive outcomes. First goal is supportive school community for each student resulting in a positive impact on the care and support of the school community. This is from community and support for students. This means exactly what it says – supporting the school community and that means everyone who is a part of the school community. We are doing it every day. The views of parents, the community and involving everyone we have.

The second is coherent systems of curriculum instruction and assessment resulting in positive impact on student success. This is curriculum, instruction and assessment. Based on what we went through with QSAC, they are impressed with all our curriculum, our structure and the growth in our assessment. Mrs. Regis-Darby asked is this summative assessment not formative assessment. Mrs. Moses stated all assessments – formative, summative, informal assessment. Mrs. Regis-Darby asked you have a data base for formative assessments in the District. If a parent wants to see the results of the formative summative assessment – do you have that data base and come in and ask for it? Mrs. Moses stated we have Ed Connect. Mr. Tatum stated the building assessments are based on the strands of the curriculum. Mrs. Moses stated we use the diagnostic tests.

The third is promote equality of educational opportunity and culture responsiveness for each student resulting in positive impact on equity and responsive – this is equity and cultural responsiveness. This is very important because for every learner – 21<sup>st</sup> century – we have to meet students where they are. We have to provide opportunity for educational success. The day where Annie failed a test and you have to move on is not so. Let's find out why she failed because she was engaged in all the instruction. She failed the test and I need to pull her to the side and we test again and we consult with the parents. With the collaboration of the parent, she

can do the work. Before we went to RTI and that is why you will see we have the RTI handbook. I know what we have to do here and make sure we put in procedures and then hone in and put out all the details for parents and everyone to see RTI.

These are the goals and I keep it on my desk to make sure we focus and we go through this all the time and there is no mistake if we have growth is because we focus on these things all the time. We are growing but we will forever grow.

No. 3 – parents/guardians/family engagement – for the very first time what we are doing; we know we have the pre-school program and we know family engagement is very important. Once we set this process with this pre-school program and involving parents in every step of the way, when they move over to kindergarten, they will want to be involved. As they move forward into 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and all the way to 12<sup>th</sup>, that is the dream, that is what we hope by family engagement. Having families participate in the schools. I know there is security purpose but I also know that we can have it if you have 15 kids in your classroom, three parents can come every day and look at your classroom. I know if I want to come visit in 15 minutes and I know I can come in. We start that process at the very beginning and the parents will want to come in the next grade level and the next and the expectations that the students have as a family, they know mom or dad are coming in to check and collaborate. It is a family type of community and that is important because everything moves so fast. The engagement of getting parents involved goes beyond just waiting for mom or dad to come home. If you know you are off on Tuesday make an appointment to come in. If you make an appointment to come in, that should be fine. The education of the youngster is very important.

Mrs. Ruiz asked are we focusing on teacher responsiveness. Mrs. Moses stated yes. Mrs. Ruiz stated to parent communication because that is not happening. Mrs. Moses stated that is what I'm saying we are starting at the bottom to really hone in on this. We have parent workshops through the district and that was something that I put in place and then from there we had supervisors putting information out online and then we moved over to the app for communication. The communication has to come into the supervisor so as we move forward I tell parents to contact the Supervisor and cc me on the email because if we are to change the mindset it is truly collaboration. It is not all the time that we go to the principal. We want to find out information as parents. Who is helping to develop and implement these programs? All hands on deck right? That information has to be the responsiveness of people that put these programs together. PTA is another important avenue and I like to be involved with and talk to parents about because that too is where there is a lot of family engagement there but if we don't do that and we don't start to push that in our new ideas in everything that we talk about at the table, we have to all agree upon that because when things come out to anyone of us through emails or whatever, we all have to be on the same page. So responsiveness from administrators and teachers is very important.

Dr. Morgan stated when you talk about family engagement, we need to keep in mind that just because the parents don't come into the school doesn't mean that they are not engaged. I'm that parent. I'm an educator. I can't always get here but teachers know that I'm very responsive. When I'm sent an email I respond back. That also needs to be counted as parent engagement because everyone can't come into the school. Mrs. Moses stated exactly. I always say just

because you see five PTA members sitting at the table, just close your eyes because there are thousands in the room because when you leave here everything is on social media – everything that we spoke about.

Mr. Tatum stated what Dr. Morgan said is absolutely true. Again, that is another mindset issue because you may not necessarily be in the building – the thought maybe she doesn't care and you are talking about the use of technology which is a strong communication device that we have available to us but again I go back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking – parents not there they don't care but that is for us to keep in mind as we get results of some of the surveys on what we do. It does need to change. I go into the school and I see parents working in the office volunteering and what is interesting to me when I walk into the building I don't think anything of it – but there are some people that come into the school building and they don't want the person in and I found this even with some of my own meetings that I have here. I think the more you chase people away the more they say what do you have to hide. The whole idea is there is nothing here to hide we really do want parents to be involved in what is going on. If you know what is going on, you know when those naysayers are out there that they have the wrong information. When nobody knows about it, it becomes the bandwagon affect – everybody is out there saying things are not good. Unfortunately that is not a fair assessment of the entire school district. I will never say we don't have anything to improve on – there is no such thing as that. Feedback is collected periodically so these things are good to hear. Having parents come into school it is something we can take under advisement and work it correctly. I have said this for years they hold me to it every time I bring up about the red carpet being rolled out when people come to the schools – we should be proud of what we are doing and not having issues that we are trying to hide anything but that we are doing good things.

The County Superintendent was here last week, I didn't feel a bit concerned about him going into any of the schools because I expected when he went he would see good things. Can I say there may be areas we may steer him away? He went to the high school and he came back impressed. Considering where we were at one point to where we are now – we have made huge strides but there is a lot of work to be done.

Mrs. Moses stated the pre-school education program – be very proud of what you did. We have parent meetings. The parents ask who do I write? I told them to write to the Board of Education and let them know. They are so happy to have a full-day pre-k program. It is full. We only have left half days. Mrs. Higgins asked how many kids are full time? Mrs. Moses stated for next year all 15 of the full-time classes are open; we have 15 seats full-time available. You can see this community wants full time. We have 57 part-time. We get emails from parents and they are very happy and pleased with this. It is a high-quality program. Someone from the State came in today, I was with her throughout the district from 9:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. and then in there before I came in here because it is very important that parents know that we want to see kids nap, have lunch, work with teachers. It is a high-quality program and parents are happy and I'm happy to be a part of it and happy to be helping the District.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated you are talking about this pre-k program and I'm sitting here smiling from ear-to-ear because this has been a baby of mine personally forever and it is really nice to be able to get those emails and letters you are talking about. My inbox has been flooded

by these parents – how do they know who I am and why are they emailing me – people are saying you were really supportive of this program and letting you to know that since we have this pre-k program that I'm very excited and I'm pushing the Board to do a dual language program. Mrs. Moses stated I heard there is a grant out there. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated yes there is.

Mrs. Moses stated next is the student board of ed liaison – we had a conversation at the table and we talked about what is good for students and nothing better than to have a student sit on the Board of Education. We talk about 21<sup>st</sup> century. I was a kid back then and I'm not a kid now and anything I learned about young people today I learned from the children and the young people from today. I know how to deal with situations. You learn to communicate and learn their language. We make a lot of decisions about our high school and we are doing the best that we can. I like to hear from students. We talked about it and I would like to have student BOE liaisons. I want to look into it because I like to hear what kids have to say. The most important information I get are from students. They tell me things, I know how to respond to that because I know how deep it goes for them and 9 out of 10 times when I do respond to them things get better. They will come in and have an adult conversation and we are teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills there and they are modeling for their peers.

Dr. Morgan stated we have one at South Orange-Maplewood – the students vote. This is the time of year to do it – you vote in spring and your person will be seated at the July Board meeting. My student rep meets with me every week and she goes and seats at the Board meeting and she stays til 12-1 o'clock at night and she advocates on behalf of her colleagues.

Mrs. Minneci asked how did you select your student. Dr. Morgan stated they ran a vote – it was an election and there is an alternate. Whoever gets the top two votes. Mrs. Moses stated I think we should look at that.

The last thing is the mindfulness and social, emotional learning piece – all of this is tied into that. This is what will bring everything around. It's not only for students but for teachers, administrators and we had that mindfulness workshop and it touched about being mindful on how you approach someone. You have to be mindful to know if someone is coming at you in a way that is not very friendly, it is not about you. We went through all of that already but now we have to move over to is you think that the social, emotional learning is all about your student but it is also about us. We need to know how to put these in check. We need to know about our awareness about a lot of issues. We need to check our bodies. We need to check a lot of things. Now it is about us because now we have teachers trained and we know about the social, emotional learning but that applies to us as does the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. We are asking teachers to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills then we need to start using them ourselves.

Mrs. Higgins stated Mary Lynn and I went to training and it was fabulous. Somebody who taught was from Asbury Park, an at risk population, but my question is at what age would you recommend starting that. I feel like it is something that should be started at a younger age. Mrs. Moses stated it is part of our pre-school program – it is called teapot. Kids have temper tantrums and they say things that are mean – so we start that early.

Mrs. Higgins stated I used to work at pre-k every day and we had one little boy that had emotional issues and acting out and found out that there were a lot of issues at the home. When Mary Lynn and I went to the workshop, the woman was talking about when you see a behavior that is not quite right you have to say “what happened to you?” not “what is wrong with you?” – so that is the teacher part “what happened to you?” Not that you are being bad. Mrs. Williams stated the other thing that she talked about was when you talk about teachers being involved, when they first implemented the mindfulness program there, that the children were getting it but the teachers weren’t so the kids were coming back reset and the teacher was holding on to stuff. It is very important that we incorporate it for both the kids and the teachers.

Mrs. Moses stated I know there are a lot of grants going out from the education foundation and one in particular they are really focusing on the mindset which is tied to the social, emotional and I know a lot of school districts do a lot of that – even with the breathing – we all need that. Mrs. Higgins stated you can’t learn if you have that. Mrs. Williams stated you have all these great programs but they are not ready to learn then it doesn’t matter how great the programs are because they are not going to absorb it. She was saying they do, they come to school with burdens in their backpacks; you don’t know what happened to them prior to them coming to school. Mrs. Moses stated that is why I’m very happy and honored to be part of hosting the “Unsung Hero” because that to in itself talks to you about that. Mr. Arminio pushed for that for two years. We got that and it’s for our entire community to see that sometimes the kids don’t tell you everything that they carry. They come in and do the work and sometimes things are on your back, we call them monkeys on our backs, and you might say things to a student but you don’t know what they are going through. But when you hear these stories, you say I will never go through what that child went through. It is too late for you to go through those things because you are already established.

Mrs. Higgins stated it was his birthday and everybody wanted to know why he didn’t bring in cupcakes and he was particularly bad that day and it took him a long time to draw it out of him but he had actually had cupcakes and his mother’s boyfriend got mad at her and threw them out. So when you learn about stuff like that you think – you have no idea. They just don’t come out and tell you. It is so emotional.

Mrs. Minneci stated you often wonder how they even come to school and learn and function with what they go through even before they get to school. Mrs. Moses stated it is very emotional for the teacher.

Mr. McDowell stated one part of education is the discipline part and that is not on here now. Mrs. Moses stated we know we have the violence and vandalism awareness and they changed that to welfare and safety. I said to the committee listen education and discipline – I know the Board of Education hands out all the discipline but what we are talking here is about what is good. If we are talking about what is good, that is going to be our mindset. The mindset is not going to be about let’s talk about discipline. What we are going to talk about is meeting the needs of the children – the welfare and safety of the children. Mr. Benaquista stated it is a more positive approach. Mrs. Moses stated a much more positive approach. Mr. Benaquista stated we know that our kids have so many needs today and that is why they say you have to utilize every resource available to meet those kids’ needs. You don’t know what these children

are coming in with. If the first person they see is yelling at them, do you think they are going to respond to them in a positive way? When we talk about climate and culture and safety is mixed in with that, one push that I'm doing and I met with the guidance counselors and I shared my thoughts on starting their days in the hallways. Grab your coffee and walk the hallways and see these kids and see the faces that pass you. If you are in the same entrance coming through the next day, you are going to notice if a child is different and you are going to say what's going on – you didn't come in with that smile like you had for the last three days. We need people that are going to support these children and make them feel like they have someone to open up to and talk to them. Unless they trust the people in front of them, they will never open up and maximize their learning. That is why the social emotional piece is so embedded because they are realizing some of the reasons why these kids aren't learning is because they haven't had that. They don't have the perfect lives at home. I speak to a lot of kids when I'm in the building and a lot of them unfortunately today there are more single family households. They don't have the support when they are coming home and that is why the State is coming in certain school districts with a certain percentage of free and reduce saying we want you to provide food during the summer because we realize these kids are only getting food when they are in school. That is all part of social, emotional. Mrs. Moses stated it isn't just about single families. Mr. Benaquista stated it could be anything. It could be families going through crises. Families that have to work two jobs. There are so many different dynamics.

Mrs. Higgins stated the workshop we went to they explained that part of your brain shuts down when you have emotional stuff going on and that is where they use yoga. Mr. Benaquista stated that is the mindfulness. Empowering these kids on how to deal with what they are dealing with is a tool that they can carry with them forever. There is so much more. We want to give them the curriculum but again they need the resources and tools to absorb that curriculum and learn from it. It is challenging.

Mrs. Williams stated this is a great time to be doing it. The commissioner of education was a superintendent then when it was implemented. Mr. Benaquista stated the two big pushes is social, emotional learning and pre-k by the commissioner.

#### FISCAL AND PLANNING:

Mr. Brennan stated facility overview - we are working on the budget and next week we will have the tax level to vote on which is the 2%. We are still working on the budget, it is a work in progress. I am going to call a special Finance Committee meeting before the meeting on Tuesday to discuss that with the Assistant BA, Manny Vieira.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked can the Finance Committee share? Mr. Brennan stated sure.

Tonight you will see something really good about the facilities. We are going to have a presentation by Dan Regal who is going to lay out an ESIP plan which is an energy savings improvement plan. We have been meeting with Dan and a couple of retired business administrators, Barry and myself probably about last six months and getting to this point. Now we are going to see where we need to go next and he will lay it all out for us. By saving energy, through a lease purchase over a 5-year period, we go in and put in more efficient boilers into the school buildings which we have done in a couple of buildings but we need to do it in a lot more;

new windows in one building to save energy – those savings come back to the general fund of the budget and frees up money because you are saving energy costs and you are getting rebates from the State. Dan will go in detail. We are looking forward to that because it will free up money in our budget that we need to build up our surplus, our fund balance. So maybe that can fall to our fund balance and we can move that at the end of the year to capital reserve or use that money for lease purchase payments and keep within our budget without affecting the taxpayers.

Some of the things we are looking to do next year is more bathroom renovations districtwide, new flooring, masonry. We have a big issue here at this building – the rear wall is crumbling and that is because the original construction, the foundation they filled the foundation with tree trunks and all kinds of things which have now decayed and created a sink hole. Asbestos removal districtwide and more LED lighting – that is another area we can finance the lighting and save on our energy costs, free up the money in our budget and use it for other areas. Lease payments on lighting, windows, boilers or if we have money, it will come to the fund balance at the end of the year and put that towards capital reserve.

The other way to do things is through a referendum but that would have to come from the Board to direct me on that.

Next is ESS – does Kim want to talk about that? Mrs. Regis-Darby asked why is it under there? Mr. Brennan stated it is good news financially. Mrs. Regis-Darby asked shouldn't it be under education? Mr. Tatum stated it could be either one but I think the angle tonight is cost savings and some of the effective things that have happened at this point with that program and it is back on this year's budget. Kim do you want to speak on this?

Mrs. Conti stated as most of you are aware, Effective School Solutions, which provides therapeutic services to students within our District. They are at the middle school and high school levels. I'm happy to report the middle school level, almost all of the seats and I'm getting that confirmed were taken. ESS has capacity for 18 students. There is good news – some children get released from the program so some kids come in and come out. Generally we have utilized the seats. If they are not utilized there are students that are in process.

The high school serves nine students. I think we are at six with other students being in process. There are children that have been dismissed because they have shown progress so that does open up other seats so it is in flux.

The good news is for marking periods one and two for the 18-19 school year – I did get in contact with ESS and I am aware that you would like ESS to come in and do a presentation. They will go more in depth about certain statistics as well. There has been a 51% decrease in discipline and the need for any disciplinary measures. There is a 9% decrease in absences and 3% increase in GPA. This year we have two students that came back from out of district and one student who is in the process of returning. We estimate and this could be a low estimate that about eight students were prevented from going out of district. It is important to know that and when we do the presentation it will be a little bit more in depth but it is also important to know to maintain students in the least restrictive environment. If you take a look at the average cost per student going out of district is about \$100,000 – when you are talking about the placement,



transportation. The other thing that is important to note about out-of-district placement, 5-10% out-of-district placement can increase tuitions so that becomes an exponential cost increase to districts as the years go on. That is about a million in savings but of course there is the cost of the program. Not to mention the students that it continues to serve. The count of eight students prevented from going out-of-district is an estimate; however, we also have to consider least restrictive environment for the student. I know we talk about money and money is very important but for students to be able to maintain the least restrictive environment, to be able to maintain their program here in District and to have non-disabled peer models is very important and the State and the law requires us to look at least restrictive environments.

Mrs. Higgins asked how many students were you able to bring back? Mrs. Conti stated two and another one is transitioning – so three for now. Also it is very important because when we did choose where we were starting the program, also looking at who and greatest concentration of students at risk of going out-of-district at the time. Remember that prevents students from going out of district which is very important as well.

Mr. Tatum stated one of the things I was struck by was that next year they were looking to bring back another four students. On top of that they are talking about incorporating an autism portion of that program which is also a growing population in the district and which will help us keep those students in the District. The other thing I found that was affective, as we get these brand new students into the District that come to us with presenting needs and we have to give them an aide and support services, they are also going to do additional assessments for us on those students to discern whether or not they indeed need to come through our door and go right outside the district. They may be able to provide us with additional stop gaps if they can determine if they are able to partake in in-district placements. Unfortunately we have students that come in, they come with an IEP and we send them out and it is costing the District a fortune. There may be other cost savings there. That is something down the road. What I guess I am happy to report tonight is this is the end of the second year, my continued recommendation for their services will be based upon what they have been able to accomplish. Finally we are starting to see a return on the investment. Last year that was one of the budgetary reductions; we had some extraordinary income and we put that program back in. There was an emotional cry to keep that program.

This program was put in as a trial, we didn't have it budgeted, we didn't get it off the ground until closer to December. Now we have actually had them a full school year and we are going into our second year now. I think we are seeing results now and I have some documentation that I can share with the Board. I asked them to come and make a presentation so you can actually see the information for yourself and see where the cost savings are and where they are taking place. Also again, to keep our kids here.

Mr. Nufrio stated I heard you say at the high school – 9 seats with some possibility of six others. Mrs. Conti stated there are nine seats because some students did get dismissed from the program – we have six that are actively in the program with other students in process through the intake process that are being considered for the program. Mr. Nufrio stated would it be too much of a stretch to ask them to also assist general ed students who may be on the cusp of performing very poorly because of discipline issues or other issues that they can assist the administration

because we are paying them for 18 and I understand that it is a cost savings but I would love to see the entire number filled if possible and they are more psychologically based type of assistants and they should be able to help any kid.

Mrs. Conti stated you are right ESS is in some school districts which they can address general education students as well. Right now when I presented to the Board we asked for students with IEPs but I can tell you at the middle school those 18 students do have IEPs and they are anticipating also at the high school. It is certainly something to look into as far as a contract regarding gen ed students. In the beginning with special services and it has branched out to the high school is the Trinitas program which comes in at the high school and they address all students. They do address at risk students both general ed students, students with IEPs, all students. Any children that are at risk with academics, emotions, it is all done with parent permission. They also do address the general education students. I think as we grow with this program we do have to consider the needs for all students. Right now they also deal with professional development – free of charge – they have never charged us for the PD which definitely helps all students and how teachers are giving support. Do they have the Insight Newsletter and Solutions – newsletters for parents and staff as well which gives them tips on different topics. It is far reaching beyond just working with the individual students. There is a lot of professional development. Ms. Jenkins, supervisor of special services and myself, we have been going to a mental health summit on April 4<sup>th</sup> with other districts and that is something they provide to us free of cost. So we get outreaching even to more students than the 18 and the 9.

Mr. Tatum mentioned regarding the autism – most of the out-of-district students have to go out due to mental delays or autism so certainly looking at a specialized program with a therapeutic component and support students within the District with autism would be very important. Mr. Nufrio stated they might actually even consider looking at the 504s. Mrs. Conti stated absolutely – they do work with all students.

Mr. McDowell asked how many students have IEPs in our District? Mrs. Conti stated I will get you that exact number but I would say about 1300. We have been higher than we have been in the past.

Mrs. Richardson stated I saw a presentation from the Director of Special Services in Irvington and they are really advancing quickly. I hope you see them at your summit. It was very enlightening. They only have 100 students going out of district and they started a program in five different schools where they are treating them right within the school district to save money. Mrs. Conti stated that is something that Mr. Tatum and I talked about and we need the space for those programs. Mrs. Richardson stated that is why they have them in all different schools. It is based on space. Mrs. Conti stated when I first came we were at about 200 and down to 113 but over these last few years, we have certainly gone back up again. We are always assessing and having conversations with Mr. Tatum. Mrs. Richardson stated they are 100 out-of-district and 1,000 in district.

Mr. Tatum stated we will have to end this session because we need to go into the worksession.

The following agenda items were not discussed due to lack of time.

**OPERATIONS:**

- Security
- Ad Hoc Committee – Food Service
- Planning Committee Update
- Electronic Registration and Re-Registration
- Vo-Tech Opportunities

**PERSONNEL:**

- Personnel Changes Based on District Needs
- Electronic Files
- Employee Handbook

**POLICY:**

- Residency - revision
- RTI District Handbook

**TECHNOLOGY:**

- Update on Technology
- Mobile app
- Parent sign-up for Genesis
- Researching Personnel Packages
- Online Forms in Genesis

**MOTION TO ADJOURN:**

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mr. McDowell, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the meeting be adjourned at 7:00 p.m. All present voting YES MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

GREGORY E. BRENNAN  
BOARD SECRETARY