

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – September 8, 2020

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The worksession meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM pursuant to the notice sent to each member. Action was taken.

Mrs. Minneci called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Dr. Guy Francis, Mrs. Sherry Higgins, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mrs. Linda Richardson, Mrs. Kim Ruiz, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Afshan Ajmiri Giner, Esq.

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

Mr. Vieira 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. Williams read the District’s mission statement.

Comments from the Public on Resolutions:

None

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved next week.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel and will be approved next week.

Superintendent’s Report

Mr. Tatum stated that next week he will be NJDOE – School Self-Assessment District and School Grade Report – HIB. We do this annually.

I will reporting on the opening of schools, district enrollment and some of the concerns that may be addressed as we begin the school year. I will be looking at those projected dates for our district to reassess the reopening of schools. We will look at the health and safety needs presented to the district and take a look at what November 1st would look like in terms of reentry. Also, any other information that will be necessary to talk about next week.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Ruiz presented the Education/Student Discipline committee agenda.

E-1. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent's Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period August 19, 2020 to September 8, 2020, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Minneci stated we will be having our committee meetings on Monday but if you have any questions you can ask them now.

Mr. Nufrio stated in the agenda under "E" – the hearing on the refunding bonds. Are we going to discuss this tonight? Mrs. Minneci stated you can but we are having committee meetings on Monday. Do you have a question for Mr. Vieira? Mr. Nufrio stated I'm just making sure it is going to be discussed. Mrs. Minneci stated yes, we will have committee meetings next Wednesday.

Mr. Tatum stated to clarify about the committee meetings. At last week's agenda review, we talked about that we normally have our committee meetings on Monday prior to any worksession because we have been spending more time on the committees – about an hour each. We had forgotten that yesterday was a holiday and that is why we didn't do it yesterday. I clarified this with Diane when I was in the office this morning that the memo was put out after we talked about the idea of having a meeting any night beyond tonight's meeting because of the agenda items that needed to be voted on. Because there were a number of issues to be discussed in detail, we decided we would do it on Monday nights. If any committee chair wants to do it on a different night by all means but this is what we scheduled at this point. The point of clarification is it had not been for yesterday being a holiday, we would have been meeting last night. Mrs. Minneci stated we did decide to combine technology and education.

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Richards presented the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Tatum stated the fundraisers are online sales and the sign language interpreter is a yearly contract that we do for the families that need this service.

Grievance/Negotiations Committee:

Mrs. Ruiz stated we met for our third negotiation’s meeting. We have entered into a one year agreement and we will resume new negotiations for the next contract so hopefully we will come to another agreement for a longer term.

Mr. Nufrio stated a reminder for those of us that have a conflict that we may not be able to vote. Mrs. Minneci stated thank you for the reminder.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mrs. Ruiz, seconded by Dr. Morgan, for adoption:

G-1. APPROVE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT – UTEA

Approve Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Union Township Board of Education and the Union Township Education Association (UTEA) for the contract term September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mr. McDowell, Dr. Morgan, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mrs. Higgins, Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Minneci

MOTION CARRIED

Operations Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Richardson presented the Operations Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Francis stated O-3 – are these fees the same? Mr. Vieira stated there was no increase in the fees from the prior year.

Mrs. Minneci stated O-6 – is there any way we can approve that tonight so that those calls can go out before next week since school is starting this week? Mr. Tatum stated I would defer to our attorneys. I don’t see why we couldn’t.

Afshan Ajmir Giner stated if there is a recommendation made by the committee for next week, there is nothing stopping a Board member from making a specific motion requesting that the Board approve the robo calls. Any Board member from the floor can make that motion.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mr. Nufrio, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, for adoption:

O-6. APPROVE ROBO CALLS

Approve Gateway Family YMCA to conduct robo calls to district parents for information concerning before and after care.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Williams asked are we adding the Boys and Girls Club to this? Aren't they also providing aftercare/before care? Mr. Tatum stated I thought we were doing both and that we had agreements with both? Mrs. Moses stated the YMCA has an agreement with the Township of Union. The Boys and Girls Club does not have a contract with the Township. They have to get approval by the State to take a look at the classroom to see whether or not they are in compliance to use with the district. They are separate as a provider of the community so the Director and Co-Director of the Boys and Girls Club said that they do not need a contract. They are working with the County and the County sent out a flyer to all Union County public schools students' families to fill out an application for free lunch so they can help support them. That is why the Boys and Girls Club does not have a contract and they have to get approval by the State as the YMCA has always done. Once the State says they are good to go, the Board of Education can prepare a contract. Mrs. Minneci stated so that is why it is only the YMCA. Mrs. Moses stated yes.

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Higgins, Mr. McDowell, Dr. Morgan, Mr. Nufrio,
Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Mr. McDowell presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mr. McDowell, seconded by Mrs. Williams, for adoption:

P-1A. PERSONNEL ACTIONS – NEW HIRES

Personnel Actions-New Hires be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-1B PERSONNEL ACTIONS – EXTRA PAY

Personnel Actions-Extra Pay be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-1C PERSONNEL ACTIONS – TRANSFERS

Personnel Actions- Transfers be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Francis stated I know there is hiring of security guards. Will they be paid right away or will they be paid when they come back? I know sometimes we lay off certain positions until they go back. Mr. Benaquista stated our security guards are going to be reallocated to every building since every building is open as well as facilitate if any parent needs to come into the building,

they will be helping out the principals of each building as well as lunch. We are serving grab and go lunches at each building so they will be involved in that. We feel we need security around the district. They all will be working. Mr. Speckhardt does have them allocated to different assignments than usual but also they are going to add us in going out to the community. Let's say that we have a family that hasn't gotten in touch with the school and we can't get in touch with that family, they will assist on that end. I already had some security guards reach out to me and offer to go in and speak with the families that we can't get in touch with. We have security guards that speak many different languages. I think it is going to help our community to send them out instead of leaving a voicemail and not getting any response back. Mr. Tatum and myself, when we spoke about security, we are using them in a non-typical capacity.

Mr. Tatum stated there will be office staff and teachers in the buildings. If people are going to be visiting our schools, there be security procedures put in place to make sure everything is being adhered to. We are taking a closer look at the comparison of paying people that are our support staff versus unemployment insurance. Some cases we find that the unemployment insurance exceeds the actual dollar amount that we put out that is from our payroll department – that is another factor that we are considering.

Mr. Nufrio stated security is paid salary not hourly. Mr. Benaquista stated I know in the contract their salary is created by an hourly rate but they are paid as a salary employee. They work 181-182 days.

Mr. Tatum stated years back when they were hourly employees, the superintendent at that time converted the numbers of hours that they had to work in order to get the benefits. For example, an x-number of hours to get paid during a holiday period and it is part of the UTEA agreement. That is something that was negotiated for them. When we out way the cost versus the risk factors that go along with it, especially with lunch every day, every school not four locations – 10 sites and the buildings are going to be open. The State is looking at compliance issues and that everyone was maintaining social distancing and they were happy to see security there because at one location they did report that there were certain regulations that were not be addressed and that caused us greater concern. The security presence is really warranted at this state of the game.

Afshan stated I would like to make a suggestion to all the Board members that may have potential conflict relating to personnel. If you want to vote on the other appointments and matters, I would suggest that you abstain and put the employee ID number.

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Higgins, Mr. McDowell, Dr. Morgan, Mr. Nufrio,
Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mrs. Higgins (P-1B), Mr. Nufrio (employee #10897)

MOTION CARRIED

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Williams presented the Residency Committee agenda.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Ruiz, for adoption:

R-4. APPROVE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

Approve Settlement Agreement for K.A.N. and K.A.N., in accordance with the non-public information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

Dr. Morgan left meeting prior to vote (7:40 p.m.)

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Higgins, Mr. McDowell, Mr. Nufrio,
Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Technology Committee:

Mrs. Paul gave an update on technology matters. Distribution of the Chromebooks – we distributed quite a few Chromebooks. We have over 7,000 Chromebooks inside the school district. We have only a staff of 4-5 people that is trying to get this done. We are short staffed in the IT Department. There several Chromebooks that were not returned from the summer program. We have parents out there that actually do have Chromebooks and they might have come by and picked up a second Chromebook. I am working on a list of names of students and finding out who might actually have two Chromebooks and I will be working with the administration and with our staff on how we can collect back these Chromebooks. There are quite a few students that did not return their Chromebooks.

There is a major delay in delivery of Chromebooks throughout the entire nation and the State of New Jersey. I mentioned this at the agenda meeting. I sent articles about other districts like Newark that are feeling the issue because of the delay in the delivery of the Chromebooks. I cannot give you an exact date but it should be less than two months.

I would like to make a suggestion both to the Board and also Central Admin that maybe there is a possibility of charging for these Chromebooks. If we are not getting back the devices, we have to have some sort of ramification. It is getting expensive when the price of the Chromebook is going up and you have parents with two Chromebooks. We have to look at something regarding that.

With collaboration with Mrs. Guilfoyle who is in charge of grants and myself, we did get the digital divide grant money. It is available but we just have to go through the process of preparing purchase orders.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I was at the high school with my son picking up his text books and there were lots of students on a very long line waiting for Chromebooks. Many students did not get

Chromebooks today. What is going to happen to those students that don't have a Chromebook and can't attend class? Mrs. Minneci stated or if they don't have a device to use in the meantime. Mrs. Ruiz stated some students were in that line for over an hour and didn't get a Chromebook and obviously that is problematic. Mrs. Paul stated I'm working on trying to gather up all our resources that are available to see what we have and I will notify Central Administration on what I have and what we will be able to do in the coming days and weeks and go from there. It is only four people trying to work on this Chromebook distribution and we have over 7,000 Chromebooks in the school district. I'm most likely going to be driving around to see what we have and all the resources available.

Mrs. Ruiz asked the ones distributed do they all have ZOOM access now? I know the students were not able to access ZOOM last week because they were blocked. Mr. Wojcik stated we really haven't rolled out ZOOM yet but I was able to push it out last minute today for students to access it for orientation. But since then we finished onboarding all the staff and student devices – so everybody should have it on their device.

Mr. Tatum stated what we have to find out is who are the students that did not get a Chromebook – that is number one. Number two, there should be some form of alternate assignments so they can keep up. The last thing I want to see is any sanctions brought against children because of materials that we don't have. There is certainly issues with us receiving Chromebooks but we are also scraping the district to see if we can find some additional support for those children. There may be people out there that have been duplicated and we will be moving on this as quickly as possible. I think we need to identify who at every school that did not get a Chromebook and make some type of arrangements with their school work.

Dr. Morgan returned to meeting (7:48 p.m.)

Mr. Nufrio stated I would also indicate that safe guards were not in place when the issuance of Chromebooks were given, they should be put in place so that we don't have repetition like that. Mr. Tatum stated I thought the key word was insurance – I thought we were doing something with insurance or fees when we first put this in place 3-4 years ago. If a person lost a Chromebook, there was some sort of procedure in place but now I'm hearing different. Mrs. Minneci stated I thought it was \$25-\$35 for insurance. Mr. Tatum stated I thought there was something but I don't know whether or not we can be updated on that piece. I thought if we had a lost Chromebook or something that needed to be repaired, we issued another one that was in stock and then that was sent out for repair based upon whatever the charge may be. I don't know where we are on that piece. When the pandemic took place we were starting to distribute devices to children who did not have a device in their house – that was the first priority.

The question is whether or not there is a key list of those students so as we are waiting for Chromebooks to come in, that we don't redistribute another one to them again. I think that was what Sandra was talking about before – about duplication of the Chromebooks. There are a couple of things that need to be assessed. I thought we had some measures in place if a Chromebook was lost or broken and that they would be repaired and then available for reassignment.

Dr. Francis stated that is correct. I thought we had insurance on lost or broken Chromebooks. I also thought that the Chromebook Agreement says that they would have to pay if it was not returned. We should look into that. Mr. Tatum stated I think you are absolutely right. That was in the initial phase of our implementation of Chromebooks. I thought all those procedures were put in place. I thought there was something that parents even signed if I'm not mistaken. I thought we put something in place and had it on file. I could be incorrect about that.

Dr. Francis stated if the security guards are helping out, maybe they can help out Mrs. Paul and her people to have distribute the Chromebooks. Mr. Tatum stated any and all of that. I think whatever our needs are. I met with Mr. Spekhardt twice on different matters and he will support us in deploying and distributing whatever we need.

Mrs. Minneci stated if we don't have the insurance, if they lose it, keep it, whatever the case may be, there has to be something where we can replace it.

Mrs. Higgins stated who do we have in place to collect because we went down the route for lunches and trying to collect for that – how do you collect money from people that don't have money for Chromebooks and to get them returned. Do we have a plan in place for that? Mr. Tatum stated I think that was the initial plan about trying to have some procedures in place. As far as I knew, it was going to be on a case-by-case basis. Thankfully not all of them were broken. The whole process was that you had to have one. If one was broken, there was a fee and another was issued to you when that was turned in. I'm not 100% sure with the waive of the pandemic took place that somewhere in the process we did not lose sight of that because we were so busy trying to get them out to those students that didn't have anything to work on at all. The goal here was as we were getting our brand new shipment in, we had a one year shelf life of the Chromebooks that were in stock, which were about 2,000, before any grant moneys came into play, we were going to move those Chromebooks down to the students that did not have them but because we got delayed in getting the new shipment, therefore we needed to redistribute the Chromebooks that were supposed to go to the lower grades. Once we get the shipment, we will have an abundance of Chromebooks. Our concern right now is as we start to get this new equipment because we got money from the Cares Act and we just got the Digital Divide grant money but there was another step and Maureen Guilfoyle took care of that for us but that also delayed the approval of (inaudible). There is also money coming from the County Freeholders. It is not like we don't have funding, it is the delay of getting the materials. All the grants have been approved. We have Chromebooks ordered but I think the key thing we have to do moving into this new wave is to put in place what we were just talking about and make sure we are enforcing it. At this stage of the game we are not in a situation where we were thrown into things and we had to scramble to get materials for people that didn't have them. Now we have the money and the support to make sure everyone has something. But we have to work with everyone and hope that everyone will work with us as we are trying to work our way through this. This is not a situation where it not just in Union and New Jersey, it is all around us. We will push moving forward and we support the students that don't have the information. We are doing the best we can so we can to make sure we get it to them as soon as possible.

Approval of Bills

Bills will be approved next week.

Unfinished Business:

Mrs. Ruiz stated this is about the CAD program. Today I had a meeting with my son and his counselor about a scheduling issue and I learned that, which was much to my surprise, a current CAD teacher does not have the CAD certification. The students that are currently in CAD 3 and 4 may not be able to take the certification test. It was very disappointing to me but also to my son because he put in a lot of time and now not be able to take the certification test. What are we doing about this because I think students and parents should know, particularly the seniors who are getting ready to take that test and may not be able to because their teacher doesn't have the CAD certification. Mr. Tatum stated we certainly will have to look into that because my impression was that the teacher that we have now had everything that was needed. I'm hearing what you are saying now for the very first time about the certification. I know she is certified by the State unless you are saying there is a different certification to administer the test because she has full certification to teach these courses.

Mrs. Ruiz stated my understanding is yes, she is a certified teacher. In order to be able to administer the CAD certification test, their teacher has to have that CAD certification. Like the prior teacher that left our district had and I was told today that the teacher we have now does not have that. Mr. Tatum stated we will have to assess that and maybe going through the County to see what our alternatives are if that is the case – what you are referring to. I do know the individual that we do have has substantial experience in teaching the subject matter. I'm not 100% sure of what certification is required beyond a regular certification to do the instruction. We will check and we will take a closer look at that tomorrow. I will ask Mrs. Moses to contact the County office so we can discuss as what may be missing. Also double check with the teacher to exactly what she has and doesn't have.

Mrs. Moses stated I will check and I will also check with the person running that department. When I did the footwork, there were nine kids for certification; if that is the case that should have been said then. I will call the County. I will also speak with the supervisor who is running that and I will also collaborate with Mr. Benaquista because that was one of the number one reason why those kids wanted to be back into that program for that certification. That was one of the reasons why we made sure we were getting them the proper laptop for that certification. I don't know why the supervisor knows that and no one else knows that. We will find out.

Mr. Tatum stated I also want to know if there is any alternative for those nine students if there is a way to supplement the program to ensure. Mrs. Moses stated if the teacher needs to get a certification through PD from now until whenever, he or she needs to go.

Dr. Morgan stated I have a concern is the rubric we discussed last year – August 2019 – regarding the math courses, where they were accelerating the honors courses and how you get in. I understand that this year the 6th grade accelerated math is no longer part of our courses; however, I do still see on the bottom of rubric where it tells you what you need to do in order to move to the next level. My question is if 6th grade accelerated math is no longer offered, how do parents know what they need to do to get into pre-algebra for 7th grade or accelerated for 7th grade because I don't see that information anywhere and I'm sure I'm not the only parent who

noticed that accelerated math is no longer offered; however, would children who are in 6th grade this year move on to the next level to ensure that they take calculus in their senior year because I think that is the purpose of accelerated program.

Mrs. Moses stated Dr. Cohen is working on that to send that out this week or next week to the parents and letting them know about the courses that they need to accelerate in the areas that Dr. Morgan is speaking from.

Dr. Morgan asked is this the first year that accelerated math is not offered or is that last year? Mrs. Moses stated it is this year. It was not providing an opportunity for all kids to get the advancement just coming in from 5th grade. What we found out was that in 5th grade, we had math classes that were not very equitable so when they get into that 6th grade they had the chance of moving and hopefully more kids would move over to the accelerated math. He is going to be sending out information to all the parents about that. Even with the math class, he is working on that curriculum to make it more rigorous and more challenging for the students so that is one of the things is working on and we will see that come forward.

Dr. Morgan stated when you say that it wasn't equitable, does that mean that it was just based on teacher recommendation and not on a rubric. Mrs. Moses stated 5th grade moving over – yes and what we found out from the kids in the other classes, they were really excelling but they weren't in that higher math class and we look at their test scores we saw that the kids that were in the higher math class wasn't excelling to that level of where they needed to be. We didn't know whether it was just teacher recommendation from 4th grade to 5th grade because in 4th grade they just move over. How do they get to that accelerated to get into 5th grade? That is one of the things that Mr. Tatum and I talked about years ago about that recommendation. Mr. Tatum stated we talked about it this afternoon today. Mrs. Moses stated we have to make sure we have our kids at that level so when they enter 6th grade they know what you are striving for and they know it is on their merit not because someone said I like you because you are quiet. It has to have more to it for our students because I look at the data and I don't see that a lot of our kids are getting what they need from that level.

Dr. Morgan asked does that mean that the teacher recommendation is being taken out because my kid is that quiet kid? Mr. Tatum stated what we talked about this afternoon is the recommendation is supposed to be that additional push beyond. I know something about this child because I teach him every day and I know he is capable of going to the next level. It is not about saying, you are quiet, you are good. I know my child well enough to say I want to push you to the next level because I see that you are a point away from the required average; that being the case, the teacher recommendation is supposed to be I'm going to give you the additional push because I know you can do it, not just in consideration that you are a good kid. That was what teacher recommendation was designed in my mind to do.

Dr. Morgan stated I know personally that does not always happen that way. I missed it with my oldest child so I will not miss it with this one. Mr. Tatum stated that is the reason why everything is being revamped because we have had a couple of issues here in the last week or so about courses because here is a child that was put into a program, they aced the program and they go for their schedule and they are not allowed to go into the honors program and we should

be pushing to get that child into that program because they are showing that they have the capabilities.

Mr. Higgins stated I know you have to be generic on your answer to this but I did want to bring up that we have several employees who have been on paid leave and we haven't heard any updates and in a generic sense do we have any updates. Mr. Tatum stated it is called executive session – it is a personnel matter.

Mrs. Richardson stated this may be executive session also regarding retirement of Mr. Vieira, do we have anything in plan? Mr. Tatum stated we can give an overview on that as well.

Mr. Nufrio stated I heard your explanation and I certainly support for students to reach their highest possible potential; that is part of the program for children that are ready to excel or at least to do well as long as all the criteria has been met; otherwise we fall into that danger zone that we may be putting a student in a situation that could be risky and at risk for failure. I'm not trying to any way minimize or mitigate what you said I believe the teacher's job is to possibly push the slide slightly if possible but only with the understated cautions that accompany it. Mr. Tatum stated I agree with you. I'm referring to a student who is on the cusp. Not to say that any student who has a talent can't try a particular program. I'm speaking about those students you know are right there. The discussion was about teacher's recommendation for a program. When a teacher makes a recommendation, it is because they are looking at it from a standpoint that I'm confident to make it in a program like this. I know that he/she has made x, y, z. Teacher recommendation should be in favor of the student not from an adverse point of view.

Dr. Morgan stated I would like to see teacher recommendation taken out of the equation. I think using the data, using multiple levels of assessments, iReady and all the other things that we have in the district and using multiple levels of assessment and taking out the teacher recommendation would be to your students who need to be in these programs. Mr. Tatum stated that is a PD topic moving forward. No disagreement there at all. I think sometimes the purpose of what teacher recommendation was designed to do may sometimes be questionable. Realistically you would think it would be for the push.

New Business:

Mrs. Richardson stated I did notice on the Union forum FaceBook that some of the parents are having trouble getting their schedules for their children and they don't know where to go. If Central Office can give them some advice – go to Genesis, go here or here. I don't understand all the workings of that but I do understand how frustrating it can be as a parent not knowing what your child is supposed to be doing on the first day of school. If you have an answer to where they can call or what they can do, I think it would be helpful to parents and students so that when school starts tomorrow, they have an idea on how they can handle it.

Mr. Tatum stated we have been informed by all of our principals that individual letters had gone out with that information on it. I know there was a delay in middle school but I do believe that has been completed. Mr. Benaquista, Mrs. Moses and myself met this morning talking about that. I think we need to double check to make sure those letters have gone out with the information. I do believe they can log into Genesis. There was a delay with Genesis last

week but I believe Mrs. Hart fixed it. Mr. Benaquista stated it could be they were trying to access when Genesis was down and there were issues with that. The principals said that all the schedules are in the system and they should be able to access it and maybe we can ask Mrs. Hart to push out a reverse 911 or email on how you access the student schedule.

Mr. McDowell stated also there are 10-12 forms that need to be filled out and some of those have to be filled out in order to access your child's schedule. If you haven't done that, you won't be able to access. Once I filled out the forms, I was able to see my kids' schedules.

Mr. Tatum stated if Mrs. Hart can get that out tonight. Mrs. Hart stated I will send out an email or something. During the maintenance was when we were entering the kids schedules and making sure everything was right before we allowed them access. At the same time, the mandatory school forms, I added them to the portals that need to be filled out first. There were a couple of other issues – the issue really hasn't been how to access the schedule, the issue has been how to get onto Genesis. When we started this meeting I had over 100 parent emails, I'm down to 56. I have been emailing parents who emailed me questions about getting on Genesis or how to do the forms. I have been working on this while I'm listening to the meeting. I think we are going to be o.k. but I can send out a quick email. I think by now the principals have sent out to them what they need to do. All the teachers have their rosters so they can email the kids to tell them what they need to do the first day and other than a couple of the new kids who registered for school today, I think we will be o.k.

Comments from the Public:

Barbara Katz stated I have a question in response to Mrs. Richardson said. My son is going to be attending Jefferson and because I'm a teacher in the district I do know how to get into Genesis and I did get his schedule – everything is listed in period one and I only see one Google Classroom on his email. There is no information on what is going to happen tomorrow. As far as I know he is not doing anything tomorrow because we haven't been contacted to be told anything. I did reach out to the principal and I did reach out to the teacher as well. I have gotten no responses so hopefully I will get a response tomorrow so I can give him something to do. He is in a regular classroom and it is my understanding that there are two teachers, one teaches math and science and one teaches social studies and ELA. This year when we got the schedule there are four different teachers. All teaching one math, one social studies, one science, one ELA and because of that each one is listed to be 45 minutes which tells me ELA and math are not the correct length of time. That is concerning to me because they are very important subjects.

Mr. Tatum stated we will look into that because there have been no special changes that have been approved by Central Office or this Board. What was described by Mrs. Katz really is indeed the procedure that has been in place at Jefferson School for a number of years. Going back to when I was the principal there, there was a double period followed by 45 minutes of math and 45 minutes of science and both teachers taught their own social studies. Under certification regulations, there is a certain percentage of the day where a teacher can teach a particular subject. No individual teacher unless there was a program in place that was approved by the Board that has a subject matter but would have to have a certain number of certification and that would be the case for all of the areas. I think we need to look at it closer because it

should be a homeroom and a switch teacher and far as I know that is the procedure we have at Jefferson School. As far as tomorrow is concerned, I would imagine that the period one is the homeroom teacher and further instruction will come from there in terms of the overview and the actual program. We will be taking a look at that and monitoring that closely tomorrow.

Ann Margaret Shannon stated president of the UTEA. I want to wish everyone good luck tomorrow. It is going to be a crazy new year and I want to thank the Board for approving our contract. I appreciate that. When it comes to teacher recommendations for certain classes, I would beg you not to remove it. I have fought more than once for the child that didn't fit all of the boxes in the grid but I knew they could do it. I think we need the teacher recommendation as part of however you want to do it. We cannot get rid of the teacher recommendation because I know it has helped a lot of kids that I pushed for even when the paperwork said they didn't.

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you, I do have to agree with you about the teacher recommendation, it does help a lot of students.

Ms. Bud stated in regards to Jefferson, it's a general question, I know the whole district is all virtual, initially after the first marking period, parents are going to be able to have the option to switch if we ever go back into the building? And then they would have a second option to switch after the second marketing period and that would be it? Are we given two opportunities during the school year since the first marking period is virtual, will we have one chance to make a decision about hybrid or all virtual for the whole school year? My second question, at Jefferson, how is attendance being taken because on the first day they are giving out the Chromebooks and on Thursday as well? How does that work? How will it be taken?

Mr. Tatum stated attendance has to be taken the first day of school because there is a 180-day requirement that every student attend school in New Jersey. It will be taken from the homeroom teacher.

When you talk about the hybrid versus the virtual program, remember that prior to going virtual, the State of New Jersey said that parents may elect to go either hybrid or virtual and they have to be given an opportunity to switch in between. The benchmarks that we set in place right now and the assessment in mid-October, with a possible return date of November 1st, suggests that somewhere in that process we would be looking at who would be going back hybrid and who would be going back virtual. Once that takes place, the rights of the parents goes back in to place where it was before. Unless of course we receive another change from the State and so far there has been no change. If we go hybrid, they will still have the opportunity to go all virtual throughout whatever benchmark time period is set by the individual school district.

Suehay Monge stated on the CAD situation – that is very concerning, if that is the case and if students won't be able to be certified. I will be following up with Mrs. Moses or Mr. Tatum on that. Some of the students who sign up to take that class and commit four years is for the purpose of graduating with a certificate. For some students it might not make sense to do that if that is the case. While it is still early in the year, students may want to drop that particular course. If we could get an answer regarding that, if that is true that the teacher will be able to get certified in time for the students to take that test.

I know Mrs. Moses worked really hard with the student liaison and a couple of parents regarding the rubrics that were revamped for honors and AP. One of the most significant changes that were made was that the point system was made to be a little more capable because where it was before was not and I know that the teacher recommendation heavily weighed on that. As example I had my son who was a sophomore going into a junior class and he was off by 2-3 points and that was really impacted by the teacher recommendation. I met with the teacher and the feedback was she thought he was not suitable for the spot; however, his grades did not reflect that. Although I know it can work the opposite way, where the teacher will give a good recommendation because the kids doesn't fit the box, that is great, and now we can get the teacher recommendation for more people that helps, but it can also hinder. If I had not pushed for my son to get into the next class, which he eventually scored in the top of the class, if I would have taken the teacher recommendation to heart and given up and said he is not ready and not send him, if I had done that my son would not have gotten into AP calculus the following year.

In addition, I want to talk about the AP classes because I had suggested several times that AP classes, I don't understand why the kids need to be put the rigger mural for the AP classes. It was mentioned at the high school by Mr. Hoyt that they were working on potentially removing all these obstacles for the kids that want to take AP classes. Let's be serious – who wants to take an AP calculus class for fun – no one. So if a student is committing themselves to take that, then give them the opportunity. It provides them equity and Mr. Nufrio to describe allowing that when Mr. Tatum says their off by one point, I can't tell you how many parents reached out to me the beginning of the school year to say please help me I don't know who I should reach out to you – my son, daughter missed the rubric by one point and they are not allowing them to the AP classes – it is one point. Colleges right now are not looking at SATs. Some of them have waived that. What they are looking at is the rigger of the classes that the students are taking. Are they taking honors classes, are they taking AP classes. Our SAT scores for the district are very low and you have to ask yourself why. We are not pushing our kids, we are not giving them the opportunity and instead we are putting obstacles in front of them and telling them that they are not good enough and that is the message the children are receiving. This is why I'm so adamant about you pushing to allow these kids to go ahead and take these AP courses. You always have the opportunity of if it is too hard for them, give them a month, the first marking period and let them remove themselves and go back into an honors class if need be. Let the students decide.

Sienna Bucu stated one, at the last meeting I brought up how the high school schedule seems to not work if you are having morning meetings. I wanted to know if morning meetings as suggested by the SEL committee, early on, were still happening. It is really important to check in on all the students' mental health right now. I'm a student and being checked in on is something like – you can't learn if you are not in a good mental health space. We have to do what we can to alleviate anything that is happening. Secondly, talking about requirements for AP classes, I'm lucky, teachers always went to bat for me. I didn't always have the rubric check marks and a lot of times it was because of the social emotional issues not because I wasn't smart. But I also acknowledge that the privilege, I am a student that people will go to bat for, and there are students that don't look like me or don't have the same connections but also deserve the ability to take those classes. No one wants to take AP calculus for fun. I took AP calculus in

senior year and I took myself out of it because I wasn't in a place to take that advanced math course when I knew I was going to be in the English and History but I had that opportunity. I think that students know what they want. You should listen to them. If there is any option for lowering the standards a little bit and allowing more students to take it, let them try it out. I do think that teacher recommendations are biased. I have always been someone who is advantaged by it but if you are talking about all students and equity in our district, there are students that I know that weren't advantaged by the teacher recommendation process. I do think what Dr. Morgan is saying to be considered as a student. If we can't handle it, let us drop it. Failure on a grade level shouldn't be what we are aspiring to when it is about education and grades don't necessarily equate to learning the material. I know a lot of AP calculus but my grades were not great. Education is important and the grades are not always indicators of knowing the materials and that also has to do with teachers and how they are evaluated but that is a whole other story. When you give students the opportunity to achieve, they will. I hope that everyone has a great start tomorrow, I know everything is stressful. Please find time for the morning meetings or afternoon meetings – whatever – the students need you so badly right now so be there for them.

Kathleen Brunsmeyers stated I want to wish my fellow educators in Union and any place – good luck this year. I am very excited for the possibilities that we have ahead and what we will be able to accomplish and all the kids will be able to do this year. They will be able to surprise us all. I came in late so the conversation regarding the Chromebooks. I heard the part that we didn't get them all back, some people have two and there is a delay. My question – regarding pre-k to first grade – are they going to be getting? What is the delay and what is the timeframe for them to get Chromebooks? Because I have a lot of parents and former parents from last year asking me that question.

Mr. Tatum stated for the pre-k, there is a restriction on how long they can be on an electronic device. Mrs. Moses and your supervisor can provide you more information about that. I believe the first grade plan is they will be getting a device of type. That money came under a different funding as far as giving the students a device to work on.

Mrs. Paul stated for kindergarten to first grade – we are working on getting devices into the hands of the kids. Due to the delay of the delivery, that is one of the reasons why we didn't get it. Now we have the funding to get devices but the delay of delivery of devices is what is also causing the issue. Once we get the shipment, we will be able to move forward. I cannot state when the devices will be in because it is a crisis throughout the entire United States and also in the State of New Jersey and there is no way to alleviate it. Other school districts are also having the same problem.

Mrs. Brunsmeyers stated everybody talks about K and first because the pre-k parents heard in the summer when we first started talking about that there would be a delay but everybody including pre-k to first grade would get a device.

Afshan Ajmiri Giner stated this is not a back and forth. You asked your question. We need to be consistent with everyone. You can continue your conversation with Mrs. Paul or Mr. Tatum at another time.

Aracely DiGirolamo stated with regards to seniors Class 2021, I'm a little concerned. I feel that we are a little bit behind in all the process and understand it is because of what happened in March and even the seniors that just graduated haven't even gotten their yearbook. I totally understand; however, I feel that at this point we should have gotten all the seniors some kind of communications where it has been said to us what things you have to do in the next few weeks. For example, in some school districts they scheduled their senior picture already. Usually the senior picture takes place in March or April and our kids did not get it obviously for all these reasons; however, I know of other high schools around Union, for example Cranford High School, had their picture taken at the end of August so those kids already got their picture taken. The school district I work at are having a meeting tomorrow, the senior class is going to get together and discuss college applications and things like that. I just wanted to throw that out to you that parents are concerned in regards to what is going to happen to our seniors. We are way behind and I think we should get on board and make sure our kids don't get behind. They already have enough on their plates with everything going on.

Paul Casey stated with tomorrow being the first day, I hate that there is going to be kids that will be going to school without technology. As a parent with two kids in the district and encouraged to use district Chromebooks but we did have tools for them to use at home, I just wanted to say maybe parents can be asked if they would volunteer to give up their Chromebooks for the time being for students that don't have something at home. Speaking for my family, we are willing to do that. Know that is an option because I hate the fact that we could have some kids that are starving without technology. I hope everybody has a great first day tomorrow.

Jeff Monge stated following up on my wife's comments and a lot of the comments we heard about advanced placement. As we talk about this and equity in our schools and we talk about a school district that is majority minority, we really need to take that into consideration as it pertains to equity amongst our students and specifically as it pertains to our students of color that is in academia it is not uncommon that those advance placement opportunities are not available to them. We should definitely speak to that. As it pertains to the Chromebooks, Mr. Casey said something I was going to say. We were advised to go and get a Chromebook. We didn't want a Chromebook for our son because he has a computer. We would totally offer up our Chromebook as many others will. When we first put out the Chromebooks we did have an agreement and that agreement did speak to a fee for fixing and we also had a penalty that if you lost your Chromebook or didn't return it, you would have to pay a nominal fee. We also had insurance for all those Chromebooks. While the parent would be asked to pay that nominal fee, there would still be insurance related to those Chromebooks. Those Chromebook agreements were supposed to be something that was on Genesis. Any Chromebook that was given out should have had someone sign the Chromebook agreement. I don't understand how you would have the same student getting a second Chromebook if they didn't return their Chromebook. I think the first thing you guys should do is ask parents if they want to volunteer to return their Chromebooks and they can use their computers at home. That would be a quick fix for a lot of the problems we have here waiting for Chromebooks.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mrs. Higgins, seconded by Mrs. Ruiz, that the Board go into Executive Session at 8:45 p.m. to discuss the following subject matters without the presence of the public in

accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b. To discuss matters of personnel, as well as matters pertaining to litigation – specifically, Bartlett v UTBOE and other matters that fall under attorney-client privilege.

Please take notice that minutes will be taken of the discussion conducted during the executive session and the Board will disclose the minutes of the executive session when the disclosure will not result in unwarranted invasion of individual privacy or prejudice to the best interests of the Board of Education and provided that such disclosure does not violate federal, state or local statutes and does not fall within the attorney/client privilege. Action may be taken when the Board reconvenes in public session.

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Higgins, Mr. McDowell, Dr. Morgan, Mr. Nufrio,
Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 9:56 p.m.

Mr. Nufrio left meeting prior to adjournment.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Dr. Francis, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Higgins, Mr. McDowell, Dr. Morgan,
Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you for your participation and for coming to the meeting tonight. Wish all the staff and students a great first day and thank you everybody for all your hard work to make tomorrow possible.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

MANUEL E. VIEIRA
BOARD SECRETARY

