

**TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
PLANNING SESSION MINUTES
FEBRUARY 27, 2020**

NOTICE OF MEETING:

The planning meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Thursday, February 17, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at the Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey 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, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mrs. Kim Ruiz, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Sherry Higgins, Mrs. Linda Richardson

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

Mr. McDowell 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.

Dr. Francis read the District’s mission statement.

Discussion Items:

Mr. Tatum stated the purpose of this meeting tonight is to go back and reflect and project at the same time some of the major areas that we have talked about over the course of the school year and bring everybody up to speed on where we are. We will have discussions about those things that we can do moving forward to enhance where we are.

1. Grade-level configuration
2. District reorganization
3. District demographics
4. Budget Update
5. Update Security Steps
6. Lunch Money
7. Curriculum Update – strengthening teaching, reading and learning
8. 2020 Census
9. COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

The first three items are connected to each other – grade-level configuration, district reorganization and demographics. We have been discussing the idea of some type of grade-level configuration that is more conducive to student needs. Back in August we had had a presentation by our subcommittee – districtwide planning committee and what we are looking to do is to try to come up with a configuration that conducive to the needs of our students that is researched based and provide the best education that we think can be possible.

The presentation was made to this Board and the Planning Committee and from that there were discussions about cost. We looked at the cost to convert some of our elementary schools to be conducive for pre-school, along with middle schools. From that we realized that there is approximately \$500,000 or better to convert those bathrooms over so that is an area possible to make this I hope happen.

More recently, we did meet with the officials from Town this week and we have another meeting for next Monday to further discuss the further recommendations that they made to us. One of the things that we are trying to accomplish is the level of input between the school district, the teacher's association, parents and that is our next steps that we will be doing. We will start to prepare agendas for focus groups at individual schools and other areas of the community. We talked about some of the students that will be affected directly. Also we spent some time looking at how we plan on doing the reorganization.

Before I get to that portion, we would like to get out and start researching what effective middle schools look like; that will be the pivotal part of this whole program. Most research indicates that middle schools don't work as a concept. Historically that was designed to prepare students for high school – from the junior high concept to the middle school concept but there are research that says that middle schools work when they are configured appropriately and the instructional program is put into place that is more conducive to the age-level needs.

People who are traditionalists will argue with me about the fact when students are sent to middle school that they really follow like a mini high school schedule. I refer to a study that was done years ago where a researcher followed around students that followed a traditional school schedule and followed a schedule that is more conducive to a slower movement or teaming approach as one example. The findings were that the students that followed the middle school schedule had very little time to practice their learning of the instruction in the classroom.

We also learned a lot over the course of the years about the impact that grade six has on students who are in a traditional middle school setting versus an upper level of an elementary building. The findings are simply clear that long grade spans have a higher academic achievement and less social/emotional interpersonal issues that happen in today's level. In addition to that we learned it has a higher impact on student discipline. Thereby reducing the number of classes at that age level and giving the opportunity of support staff to work more with the social/emotional needs.

We want to go out and take a look at what these schools look like that have the idea of an effective program followed by working with architects on what kind of middle schools that we actually want to put in place here in Union. We said over and over again that the whole purpose

of this is not to just take things and shuffle them around so we can say we are doing something but to put together something that we think is going to be unique to the needs of this district. Looking at an organization of a school that may serve as a model to us is not necessarily mean that everything that is in that school is going to be in our program but just to use as an assessment tool.

The final part under the configuration piece is the idea of researching funding sources to develop the most useful project after we have an idea of a cost analysis from our architects – to put together on what is it that we actually believe would be appropriate for our students in Union.

Any discussions from the Board at this point?

Mr. McDowell stated about the 6th graders in middle school, they have more disciplinary problems in middle school as opposed to K-6? Mr. Tatum stated discipline is one area we find; effective middle schools that have limited movement and closer supervision and longer time spans throughout the course of the day, they tend to have better progress. What we find is the State of New Jersey continues to change the models that they suggest. They suggest a middle school model that spans grades 4-8 which is an area where if we were to configure that, it would be a concern because of one simple reason because you also have to be concerned about what age do we bring students together for the first time. Right now we do it at grade 5 – ten year olds are very vulnerable, very dynamic and very impressionable. But when we talk about them coming together and then leaving each other for three years and then coming back together, the experience, and there are different experiences among different schools, may be different when you go away for three years. What we are proposing to do is take a look at the grade level when they move into a middle school setting, it is a middle school setting they have all been nurtured to be prepared for and when they come together in grade seven, they will stay together until they graduate high school. That is the thought behind that.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I remember when we first spoke about this which I thought was an ambitious goal to roll this out in the next school year and that doesn't sound that will happen. Mr. Tatum stated you are right - that is part of the next discussion. One of the things we talk about all the time is lessons learned. As we review the things that we have and an example is one of the questions that was raised was about converting schools to a model where we would need to have more pre-k classes. How much is that going to cost? When we had the meeting with the planning committee, the question came up – how much is it going to cost? When we were dreaming about the whole concept, cost was not even a consideration at that point. We researched and we found that these were the things that would be effective for this particular age level and here is the reason why. Now we have taken the time to go to our architects and we have gone to our Township and talked to them about the different ways that we could possibly fund a program like this. Taking a stop gap right there and looking at where we thought we would be, when we first talked about this, remember by the end of November/December we were supposed to have done one of the last things that I said which was go out and do the focus groups at the schools. It shows you that are timelines are going to become more realistic now. Our target date is the 21-22 school year.

Mr. Nufrio stated we spoke about a neighboring district adopted a very novel and different idea which is pre-k through 8. Have any studies been looked at to assess how valuable or invaluable that grouping may be? Mr. Tatum stated there are studies out there that speak to just that. The conclusion for most studies for the K-8 model is that the whole concept we are looking for is right in the middle which is really school attachment, takes longer to achieve. In the long run there are some K-8 schools that do better academically but the findings aren't significant enough to say it is necessarily better. A K-8 model, if it is done right, may take longer for children to actually show academic growth but there are some studies that suggest that maybe that model does not necessarily nullify that over a middle school. It does support the longer grade span issue but the question we have to raise here is what is needed here.

Mr. Nufrio stated I was just curious because it has been ten years since that had gone into effect. Certainly Union doesn't have the logistical support for that. We can't accommodate. Mr. Tatum stated I recall that they did it not so much for the academic, it was more for the discipline and having less grades of that particular grade level. Where you see the shift in developmental needs which is especially at the middle school level, it is very difficult and one of the pieces I would like to bring out is when you talk about transitions into high school, I think the worst thing you can do is have students in eighth grade transitioning from all different places into one school. I think that is more detrimental. They will come in with an identity. When you come from one school and move together as a group, you will see less of those other issues. In eighth grade you are the king of the hill in the building and you want to come in and maintain that same clout going through high school. And what we know about 9th graders, that is the highest level of academic failure. Mr. Nufrio stated discipline was definitely a difference because the 8th graders even if they were the king/queen of the hill, they tended to be a little more respectful because of the little kids that were present.

Mr. Tatum stated when I first started teaching, one of the things for kids were to give them more responsibilities. They were the safety patrol, the student council – they had a lot more responsibility – playground supervision, along with teachers and so forth. I'm not necessarily saying that is completely wrong but I think we have other challenges. Mr. Nufrio stated 4-8 is not beyond reach. Mr. Tatum stated no it is not but the only problem I have with 4-8 is you are still creating the same situation where you have all these kids coming from all different places and I think that is one of the problems I see at the 5th grade level when we separate them and then they come back together. Now you are doing the same thing four years later and four years older. It is nothing more than a consideration and discussion because at this stage of the game, all we are talking about now is conceptual.

Dr. Francis stated you mentioned the Township giving recommendations, what is their role in all of this. Their role is more of a partnership for anything they may be able to support us in trying to reconfigure. For example, if this goes down to any type of bond or something like that, there may be some guidance here. They were very supportive when we met. Township support is, Board support and community support equals success. If there is a different message being sent out there and people are not on board, then at the end of the day our kids suffer. I said this before, we are configured for 1969. It is 2020. This has been going on for 50 years and we are still configured that way. Talking about demographics – our demographics don't speak to the need to continue doing what we are doing. For some people they love what they do but it is not

about what they like, it about what is right for the children at this point. Research points out that too many transitions don't breed the high level of academic success.

Dr. Francis stated I just wanted to know what their position is. Mr. Tatum stated we are enlisting partnerships and input from all around this community. Whatever proposal we come up with, it is everybody's school district. If everybody is going to be on board, then it will breed some success. If there is going to be a situation where there is one message here and another message out there, we are going nowhere. Unfortunately, the way I see it, we may not do this, we may not do anything, but you need to do something because right now you are not maximizing the resources that you should have.

District reorganization – target date 21-22 and right now the suggested grade spans – this is a recommendation – pre-k thru 6, 7 and 8, 9 thru 12. That will cut down on transitions in the district. When we talk about grade spans, I read a study of a system of grade 7 thru 12 and that is a wide age span. That is something I know would never fly here. In the small rural area where the study was conducted, it was highly effective.

Mr. Nufrio stated the logistics of that could meet that challenge but you would have three high schools. Mr. Tatum stated some school districts have a campus where one building houses 7-8 and 9-12 in the other building – but all on the same campus. There is no limit to grade spans but the research speaks that longer grade spans are higher in success.

District demographics – a study was done on demographics and enrollment. The enrollment in the district although was projected from that report to have a decline in the elementary level, right now after two years the enrollment is pretty much the same. This has nothing to do with any building go on right now – the implementation of pre-k has an impact on enrollment and we know next year we project higher numbers. The implementation of pre-k and the needs that we tried to meet is causing our enrollment to go up a little bit.

There are some consideration that need to be taken about enrollment – in the last couple of years we have had a number of students removed from the rolls because of non-residency. Another thing is when you look at the students that are different from last year to this year, the numbers are about 25-30 but we asked about 12 students who were the children of employees to be removed because of the policy change. When you add the policy change to the residency, are those that have been removed. So we have no statistical difference from last year to this year. Our number is around 7,245.

In terms of the demographics, I think I mentioned not too long ago, as I review the different school enrollments, I think African American and Spanish students are becoming the majority of the student population in the district but there are still about 20% white population and the other categories all make up the rest and African American is at about 45% and Hispanic is in the 30%. Our enrollment has been steady over the last two years – I looked at 2018-2020 and there has been some minor shift.

In looking at the reorganization, one of the things we talked about was capacity of the buildings. I shared with the planning committee the demographics, as well as the enrollment and

capacity that we have in each of our buildings. Even though we had the study done in 2018, the numbers at this stage of the game will not be different in terms of capacity of the buildings. We have some programs that have come in and in place. I don't know what we have projected for the next set of students coming in but capacity wise we considered the existing special needs programs and when they look at capacity they included those programs that we have in place. Why do that because at one point when this whole thing was undertaken, special education population and programs were a lot smaller. When you talk about putting into place a group of students in a building, he said capacity is 700 – well that is great but you don't have five rooms that only allow you to have the maximum which might be 11-12. Now you can put half of the amount of students in these classrooms due to programs and Code restrictions. All those things being said, we want to make sure we look at capacity and we are constantly revealing the programs that we have in place and where they are located as well. That is a whole other undertaking. There are so many layers to this whole process and that is why we need more time. Capacity is very important.

Mr. McDowell asked is capacity based on a number of classrooms? Mr. Tatum stated it is based on the number of classrooms but the programs dictates how many kids in the classroom. Once you have those limits and you have an average class size you can go up to that number; however, when you have a self-contained program that has eight students, a teacher and an aide and the maximum capacity might have been 10-12 but those eight students occupy a room that was a regular size classroom. Capacity is usually 25-30 depending on square footage of each classroom; that has to be taken into account. Autistic programs – small enrollment in the classes yet need a great deal of more space. In pre-k there is a limit to 10-15 per class and they need a full classroom. I projected two classes per school and that may not be right.

I think the number will be pretty close in looking at enrollment. Projection wide we have the capacity to be able to house the programs that we are talking about doing as of present day.

Mrs. Ruiz stated those projections are based on present day and the fact that enrollment has remained somewhat consistent but we know that there is a lot of building in our Town. We have to assume that a certain percentage of those units in those new developments are going to have people with children or will soon have children. How do we account for that in our projections? If we configure with these numbers and then we see a boom in increase in children based upon all these developments, can't assume that everyone who moves in won't have children. Mr. Tatum stated the demographer did assume that but they don't realize is sometimes there is a change in the way the property is being offered. If it goes from a sales to a rental, sometimes people won't be able to come up with a down payment but are able to come up with a security deposit so that makes a difference. If I had an opportunity to get a brand new place, I will take that opportunity.

In looking at the capacity, I also foresee room for this reconfiguration to grow. Mrs. Ruiz asked how much? Mr. Tatum stated districtwide 2,000. Mrs. Ruiz stated if we reconfigure on this concept – pre-k-6, 7-8, 9-12 – we have room to grow up to 9,000 students. Mr. Tatum stated yes. For example, Jefferson School – let's say there is a capacity of 600 and I project an enrollment of 525 – I have 75 spots in that school. The high school may have a capacity of 3,000 but right now we are at 2,200 – so that is another 800 students for that building. I'm talking off

the top of my head because I don't have the numbers in front of me. I know there was significant room to grow in every building.

Mrs. Ruiz asked but grow comfortably? I think of the high school and transition from one classroom to the next is a big traffic jam. It is almost impossible to walk. Mr. Tatum stated lunch time, going to classrooms, we always have issues and that is why we talk about containing the 9th grade a little bit better. When you say comfortably, those projections are based upon the actual capacity study that was done so that is with existing programs. The likelihood of getting that many students probably is not going to happen but I can't say it won't. Let's say they project 15 students out of it and we get 40 students districtwide and we are talking about three more schools on this side Town and we will have more space in those schools because one grade level might be moving from one area to another and you are balancing it out more evenly.

Dr. Francis asked what is the projected class size? Did you guys speak to the Town about the developments and what they are willing to do or should be doing? Mr. Tatum stated we did talk to them about the developments that are going up in Town and they may direct us and guide us on how to find some resources. I don't know but we have asked them join in the partnership with us in finding ways to finance but that is where we ended that meeting. There is a lot more discussion moving ahead. If we can't find the right type of referendum that is not going to happen and we are going to be stuck in a situation where unfortunately is back to the drawing board.

The project class size right now is 23-25 and we are looking at that in terms of enrollment. Also, what is in our current grade levels because when I go to buildings I can look at how many 4th graders we have in Union and how many are housed in each building. Looking at that will give me the average class size. Dr. Francis the range can be from 22-25 – it could be 21-23 but it will be within that range.

Mr. McDowell stated I'm thinking about the neighborhood schools right now – Livingston, Washington – all the elementary schools and they go from pre-k – 4. With the reconfiguration/reorganization they will be going from pre-k to 6. We have the capacity to handle that now. Mr. Tatum stated yes.

Mr. McDowell asked are any schools beyond capacity? Mr. Tatum stated in reviewing the numbers recently, Washington School still has a significant number of students. They are under 600 right now but at one time they were over 600. Hannah Caldwell's enrollment has gone up because they are housing more pre-k than they were two years ago. Right now Washington is at 556 and Hannah is somewhere in that same area.

What is going to be powerful is when we talk to parents, staff and the community and get a feel of what they are thinking.

Next is the budget – Mr. Vieira.

Mr. Vieira stated the majority of the 20-21 budget is in place. The proposed budget is \$142 million and that is made up of three funds. The general fund is \$132 million, special

revenue fund is \$7 million and the debt service fund is \$3 million. The debt service is consistent every year unless we issue more bonds. We don't have any bonds maturing in the near future.

Our revenue increase is 2% on the municipal levy. The municipal levy is \$90 million so 2% is a \$1.8 million increase in revenue. The State of New Jersey released their State aid figures today and Union got 1% increase which is about \$393,000 which isn't very much. We are working with \$2.2 million increase in revenue.

Mrs. Ruiz asked do we know why our district increase was so significantly low compared to other districts? Mr. Vieira stated I didn't compare us to other districts. Mrs. Ruiz stated Dr. Morgan said her district got 15%. Can we look into why our district gets such a meniscal piece of the pie when you look at the larger percentages the other districts are getting.

Mr. Vieira stated there are formulas that the State of New Jersey uses for the State aid. Mr. Tatum stated one of the issues we had last year and we asked for an explanation and it was the issue of the local fair share was not adequate and what put us under adequacy. When I did an analysis on Linden, Linden's adequacy is right where the gentleman from NJASBO told us that is where we should be and they have enrollment based upon that number they get and they raise their tax levy every year so when they get the increase is higher because of that – I believe.

Mr. Vieira stated the increase in the special ed was the increase in our special education State aid. All the other areas were flat – no increase. The other areas consist of transportation aid and security aid.

Mr. Nufrio stated the question should be why so little – is that based on the funding formula they created? Mr. Tatum stated the way it was explained to us last year, through the State funding formula we were underfunded by \$2.5 million and there is a declining balance over seven years so we are getting 1% over seven years. Every year the balance will decline and eventually it will get us to the point where that \$2.5 million is part of the regular formula that is funded to us through State aid. The second piece is the issue of adequacy. The issue is that our community over the years, according to how it was explained to me, before the cap on the tax levy of 2% which we couldn't go over, we were always under the amount of money that was needed because we didn't have the issues that we have now. The \$9.1 million you hear me talk about – they took it away and when you take that amount of money away and then you start to build on a lower number, when we got to the aid in 2018-19 we were where we were in 2008 in terms of aid coming into our district. When you add that with the fact that they are saying what we were told was all those years you have gone below the 4%, now you are getting a smaller percent. What they said to us and Mr. Vieira and I were on the phone, you should be asking your community for anywhere from 3-4% of a cap in order to catch us up.

Mr. Nufrio stated the one year was not a recurring revenue that we saw x-amount of dollars because of that radio licensing. The following year it should have gone back to the same number as the previous year. Mr. Tatum stated didn't that money go back into capital reserve. Mr. Vieira stated yes. Mr. Tatum stated it was the way it was spent down and when it was all said and done, the \$5 million was money that was leftover from the sale. Mr. Nufrio stated they kept that reduced number going forward and it should not have been.

Mrs. Minneci stated am I correct that the last few times we didn't go to cap – the 2%? Mr. Vieira stated we have but about three years ago we had the option to go above cap because we have about a million dollars in bank cap that we are able to increase our levy and it was decided by the Board to not increase the levy by more than the 2%. The one million dollars in bank cap that we could have used to raise revenue, it just goes away. Mrs. Minneci stated so that was a mistake.

Dr. Francis stated I don't know if it is a mistake. I thought it was tax relief for our tax payers. I think it is unfair that you have new development being built here in Union and we are asking for pilots and not asking for taxes – we are giving tax abatements and that is wrong. That is my big thing and then we have to go ask the taxpayers to go above bank cap and ask for more additional funds to catch us up – I think it is wrong to go to taxpayers when the Town itself has not done their fair share or their due diligence for us. I think it is wrong. Mrs. Minneci stated Mrs. Richardson knows how tax abatements help the community in the long run. I don't understand it. Dr. Francis stated I want everybody to know because you are all here, we need to make cuts, don't come here and putting on your shirts and crying and saying it is unfair that jobs have to be lost. We don't have the money and I want you all to know that. Don't come here next year doing what was done last year when we had to let people go. We don't have the money unfortunately. You are going to have to find cuts.

Mr. McDowell asked the 2% is out of the question now? Mr. Vieira stated we could go for a second proposal. We would have to go for vote and the taxpayers would have to approve an increase of more than 2%. It would have to go on the ballot in November.

Mr. Nufrio asked what is 1%? Mr. Vieira stated \$900,000. Mr. Nufrio stated when Mr. Brennan was here I asked him to give an approximately on how that would translate to the average homeowner – the impact. Mr. Tatum stated since the 2% was imposed, I want to say around 2011. Since it has been imposed we haven't asked for an increase above the tax levy. Mr. Vieira stated it has been 2% on the levy and even less increase on the rate because the ratable's have got up in the past four years – that is the other part of it. As the ratable's go up the tax rate goes down. We are talking 2% on the levy currently.

Dr. Francis stated I think we used bank cap once. Mr. Vieira stated possibly eight years ago. Mr. Tatum stated the last opportunity the Board said no.

Mr. Vieira stated the other side is the expenditure side. The current teacher's contract which is ending June 30, 2020 – the settled agreement for the certified staff was 2.7%, the support staff was 3.0%, we just got our health benefits increase effective March 1st and that is increasing 5.9%.

Special service costs on average has been increasing about 7% over the past five years annually. Besides the salaries, it is the out-of-district tuitions which is about \$12 million, \$5 million in special ed transportation costs, \$1 million related services which is therapy, OT, PT, speech, all the different evaluations.

Mr. Nufrio asked how much of our budget goes towards the magnet school? Mr. Vieira stated maybe 25 students and the tuition is \$6,000 per student. Mr. Tatum stated we have an increase in charter school students. Mr. Vieira stated we have 39 students going to charter schools. Mr. Nufrio stated that is about \$13,000 per student. Mr. Vieira stated there is a lot of money going out-of-district - \$650,000 going to the charter schools.

Mr. McDowell asked transportation is \$5 million? Mr. Vieira stated yes, contracted transportation. Our in house transportation salaries is about \$2 million.

We are open to any thoughts or suggestions on how to reduce the expenditure side of the ledger. Mr. Nufrio stated my first recommendation would be to try to have a debate with the State as to the numbers we are seeing in increases as opposed to what we are getting in revenue. Mr. Vieira stated we tried that with the application. Mr. Tatum stated we also talked to a number of people on the State level. We knew we weren't getting any money and people in the Town went ballistic because they thought we didn't do our due diligence as far as trying to get additional money into the district. We have been trying to get more grants. Some grants are competitive and they require a lot of work and we get them done.

Maureen Guilfoyle stated we just heard that we got the vape away grant from Hackensack Meridian for \$5,000. Thanks to Jill Hall and Lucille Williams – they put together a proposal for a curriculum that will be in our health classes. Mrs. Ruiz asked can it be used for the purchase? Mrs. Guilfoyle stated no it was curriculum and to educate our students on the dangers of vaping. It didn't speak to equipment.

I'm working on a grant now to stop school violence and that will be submitted on Monday. We are working on putting in a new telephone system and also we had suggestions from the public in our Town hall meeting – we are also looking at software that is an app that will alert and it shows a map and it can show where the incident is occurring. Even in the classroom, it is not just for lockdowns. If there is an altercation in the classroom, you can signal that on the app and they will know what room to go for. That grant is up to \$500,000. Mrs. Ruiz asked who does that signal go to? Mrs. Paul stated it goes to administration first – it is whatever in our crisis plan. There is a chain of command and it has to follow that.

Dr. Francis asked is that for the teacher's only? Mrs. Ruiz asked students as well? Mrs. Guilfoyle stated no. Mr. Benaquista stated it is another avenue to allow personnel to report quicker. We are also building in stuff about door security, building security notification and all that stuff. Hopefully we will be a district they want to work with but the number one is the telephone system which will be the hub to control everything. We will be in good shape if we get this grant. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated it is a federal grant which involves the whole country. They are the toughest ones to get.

On the academic side, I recently applied for and it is in the second tier of being reviewed and that is for expanding our computer science classes at the high school. It was submitted and I got a notification that it went to the next level of review. We are hoping that we get that so we can use that to build a new computer science lab at the high school for AP science and that is in conjunction with Kean University. Kean University also submitted a grant and put us in as a

partner and that is for the professional learning piece for our teachers to learn more about computer science and coding and so forth into classrooms.

There is a couple more coming down the pike – Alyssa’s law – coming from the State that we can apply for. Mr. Benaquista stated it is a number guaranteed either towards the panic bottom and we think we are at a level now with our communication system with the Town that we can get the waiver and then apply that money towards other security measures that they allow you. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated \$365,000.

Mr. Nufrio stated all of these grants are welcomed and an important part of the puzzle but it doesn’t solve our budget problems and most of them are not recurring. They are a onetime shot. If we choose to maintain, it is on us.

Mr. Tatum stated Title I – in terms of revenue and we repurposed a lot of that money over the last two years. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated we have a lot of programs going on. We have updated and implemented new programs this year. We went to schoolwide for three of our schools – the high school, Burnet and Franklin have schoolwide initiatives meaning that we are no longer targeted assistance there that all the students in the school can benefit from all the Title I programs. We don’t have to come up with criteria that the students have to meet in order to be eligible for our programs. We have at the high school the Algebra I lab courses and the English lab courses. We have a lot of the teachers there that are working that and it is coming out of Title I budget – part of their salaries.

Then we worked on implementation of schoolwide PVSIS program throughout all the schools and more so in our Title I schools. We have been collecting the data on that and how it is affecting discipline data and so forth.

We have schoolwide teams in all of the Title I schools where we had to put together an annual school report and we have been monitoring that. We have smart goals. We have been monitoring the smart goals and collecting the data, meeting and seeing if we are implementing our action steps and so forth and we will go through that process again.

The high school also has an afterschool program where we have support enrichment and advancement. We have been using the APEX tutoring program so they have the support there. They have the enrichment piece and advancement. There are some students that are taking courses after school that we do not offer during the day and they will get credit for that through the APEX Learning Software.

We also continue with Title IV – the counseling and mentoring and social/emotional learning is taking place after school and on Saturdays through Jill Hall’s program.

We implemented Star Renaissance in the Algebra I and ELA lab courses – that is an assessment and data collection tool.

At Burnet we have an after school program which is called SWAG – Students With A Goal and they have a PBL (project based learning) along with the social/emotional piece where they have yoga and a multi-sensory room that we are putting together.

At Franklin we have the project based learning during the school day and we also have it after school. We establish SEL programs during recess time at each grade level. We have mindful mornings. We have the Leader in You and we have scholastic Saturdays.

Hannah Caldwell – this year has a targeted assistance program so they have an afterschool program, an extended day program and they are doing the project based learning as well. Also they have the social/emotional learning program during their recess.

Afterschool STEM program at Burnet that we got through Ruger’s 4H program. It is called “Design it” and they are doing engineering projects.

I have the details of each program if anyone wants to take a look at them. Mr. Nufrio asked can you email that to us? Mrs. Guilfoyle stated sure.

Mr. Vieira stated unless the Board has any cost reduction ideas, we can move on to the update on security steps.

Mr. Benaquista stated the night we had the security night, we had a list of things that were brought to us – just to highlight some of the things we took care of already – the number one thing was communication and we are using Genesis to push out notifications to the parents, students and teachers for access to gaining information. Moving forward we will be pushing out more messages through Genesis.

Again we met with security and building principals and talked about a lot of things that were mentioned. We met with our district crisis team. We are putting in certain measures dealing with special services/medical. We are building that into what to do in those cases especially for long periods when students are in lockdown. Since then the high school has a Class III officer up front. We did meet with the Township and we are already starting communication of messages sent out together. It is not just one group sending out one message and another group sending out another.

Mrs. Ruiz stated you said since then the high school has a Class III officer in the front. Isn’t a Class III officer what we discussed previously? It is an armed officer that specifically works for us and not the police department. Mr. Benaquista stated correct, we control their time and schedule. They get hired through the police but they are our employees during those hours. The police cannot pull them off and reallocate them. If it was a Class II officer they could do that. We chose to go Class III. Mrs. Ruiz asked this is in addition to our resource officer? Mr. Benaquista stated yes. Mrs. Ruiz asked when did that start? Mr. Benaquista stated I think she got sworn in about a week and half ago.

Mr. Nufrio asked the Class III – the rate of pay is that different? Mr. Benaquista stated it is \$30/hour, no benefits, no pension. Mr. Nufrio asked what is the actual time? Mr. Benaquista stated 7-3:30.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I recall when we had the lockdown meeting that you did discuss this Class III officer concept with the public. After the meeting, much of the feedback I saw and heard was that many parents were not thrilled with the idea of having an armed police officer in the school. This is the first time I'm hearing this. Mr. Benaquista stated it was Board approved. Mrs. Ruiz stated did anything go out to the parents saying FYI parents there is now going to be a Class III officer in the building. Mr. Benaquista stated there is a resource officer in the building that is armed, as well as our local police do walk through our buildings all the time. Mrs. Ruiz stated this Class III officer was somewhat controversial in the public – did anything go out to the parents? Mr. Benaquista stated not to my knowledge. We can discuss with the building principal to send out something. Mrs. Ruiz stated I think it would be a good idea. As parents, we find everything out too late. No one ever tells us anything. We find out from our kids. We have to do better with getting ahead of that. This might be a good opportunity to test out the Genesis communication aspect or even through the school app. There was a lot of negative comment from the parents and to throw it out there without parents knowing that it was implemented and finding out for the first time and then they get upset and say there is never any communication. We should do better about that.

Mr. Tatum stated the district has the option of having them armed or unarmed. Mr. Benaquista stated I know there were questions about the Class III but I don't remember any complaints and we haven't received any complaints. As well as there is a resource officer in that building that is armed. To say that they are upset because of the Class III officer being armed which is someone that has been on the police force for many years and now a resource officer that is armed and now you want one armed and one unarmed? I get upset because I don't want anything to happen to our kids. In a real situation and now you have two people going to the issue instead of everyone locking down.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I understand and I'm not disagreeing with whether or not we have Class III officer, I think you need to communicate with parents. Mr. Benaquista stated I will talk with my director as well as the building principal to push out something through Genesis. Mrs. Ruiz stated they may not have had complaints at that lockdown meeting but the feedback was huge after that lockdown. Mr. Benaquista stated I want to go on record saying this, I rather have parents be made at me for having an armed person in that building than a parent be made at me because why didn't you have an armed person in that building that could have saved lives in a real situation. I will take that. I did my best.

Mr. Tatum stated I concur with that because the other side of it is this – we sit in a meeting for four hours and this is something that we talked about last summer. We talked about it a year ago. We had a presentation by the police director. Mrs. Ruiz stated to be fair that presentation, we did that in executive session. The public was not present during that presentation. I know Mr. Benaquista is very passionate. It is not whether we did it or not, it is about just letting parents know what we did or what we are going to do.

Mr. Tatum stated the frustration that comes in to hear this is that we just came through a major crisis and we did something but there is always well if you have done this, you couldn't have done this – if we did nothing – gosh darn it they did nothing again. Dr. Morgan stated they just like to complain. Mr. Tatum stated we have been preparing security wise for years and this is nothing brand new.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I understand that we are not going to please everyone. We never will please everyone but at a minimum what we should do is be transparent with our communication. They are going to complain regardless but let's give them one less thing to complain about. Let's make our communication a little better.

Mr. Tatum stated if I'm hearing this correctly, we announced that this is something we are doing, we announced that we have someone that has been approved by the Board, we just have to say "now she is here". Mrs. Ruiz stated the feedback I got from parents was that they didn't like the idea of a Class III officer and the way they expressed it to me was they didn't think it was actually going to happen, they thought it was still conceptual. Mr. Benaquista stated did you tell them it was Board approved? Mrs. Minneci stated maybe they need to come to a meeting or watch it on TV. Mrs. Ruiz stated I think they don't even know we have a resource officer. Mr. Benaquista stated I will introduce them next time. Mr. Tatum stated we have people saying we are not keeping their kids safe – I just don't know how you succeed in this.

Mr. Benaquista stated some of the other things that were brought up – we all have been in that high school since that meeting several times. I was in 7-8 times and walked the building and stayed in there for hours. The one thing that we did ask in administration and I have seen the difference, is having the teachers at their door. I'm going to keep on following up on that. I did notice after that situation, it seemed like in the hallways I saw more teachers at the door. I can say I was happy that the teachers were there monitoring the students and we ask them to help because security is every employee has to put a hand in to keep the building safe.

Mrs. Minneci stated it makes a big difference – the tone of the building when the teachers are at the door.

Mr. Benaquista state we did address the pizza delivery and I did witness the pizza delivery through the front. They will continue to go through the front. There was a particular parent that wanted to meet and we did follow through and have meetings with the ones that requested meetings and I had one or two that came to my office that just showed up and I met and sat with this one gentleman that comes to our Board meetings every once in a while. Great conversation and put a lot of stuff on the table and got me looking at things a little bit different as well. I haven't had a chance to share with Mr. Tatum yet. We are listening to parents that want to share. It is about getting everyone involved.

The last thing is we said we would meet with the kids. Unfortunately it had to be postponed from yesterday but it is tomorrow that I will be going to the high school and meeting with a group of kids. We are going to start with 40 and have it grow from there. I want to listen to them and impact their feelings that they shared that night.

We have a full list and we are addressing all of them. Those were the main things. Mr. Tatum stated one thing from my Township meeting, when I talked with them about communication when they commandeer a building, they shared with me that there is a new layer of security that is imposed by the prosecutor's office. Here is what we had on that day. A multifunction – we followed our plan as written, the police department made every effort to follow their plan and the prosecutor's office came in and took over the whole operation and told them what to do and the first directive I gave was when I heard modified lockdown from a lockdown to a modified lockdown – I said to the principal you have to make an announcement right now because children are already late coming out of school. I think people that walked away didn't understand clearly that there are constraints that come about with first responders. I asked the police director to share that part and I tried to go back and reiterate that again. I'm not sure that the interaction and message was clear. A new layer has been added so what we decided to do is Gerry said a little while ago is we are going to be communicating with the police department and myself and the administrator at Town hall will be communicating with one another as opposed to where we are waiting to get a directive from the first responders and the prosecutor's office so we can put out the information as we go along. We are trying to amend what has been in place because another layer is added. That is another factor that came about from this lockdown.

Mr. Nufrio stated Director Zieser commented that the protocol has changed. As soon as the lockdown was announced and the police were in charge, they had to respond and answer to and it is questionable on how sane is that because they then have to come and take control and become the spokesperson as well as the director of all activities. I can see the importance of having them involved so as such perhaps a meeting with the acting prosecutor and the Town officials. Mr. Tatum stated I will bring that issue up. The feel I got the last time we had a sit down, they were so uncertain themselves. Normally when procedures change, usually at the Superintendent's Roundtable, the prosecutor will come and share that with the entire County. Last month we weren't able to go so I don't know if they already talked about that already. I will follow up. Mr. Nufrio stated at least have them hear what the challenges are when you have not just one entity but a super entity which could cause a lot of confusion.

Mrs. Minneci asked can you clarify about the students going back into the building which wasn't mentioned at the meeting at the high school. Mr. Tatum stated when we heard this whole issue, emotions ran so high that one of the things that we have since learned is that the police took the kids back to the building because that area was deemed secure by the police department. We later learned that but it didn't come across that way that night. Mrs. Ruiz stated Chief Zieser or whatever his title is was "what am supposed to do I'm not going to babysit them" – he said something like that. That to me meant I don't know what the hell I was going to do with those kids so I just shoved them back into the building which could have been more potentially dangerous. Mrs. Minneci stated that is why we wanted to clarify that because that is the way it sounded. Mr. Benaquista stated they did that from my understanding is they put the building into a modified lockdown. They were moving throughout the building after that. Mrs. Ruiz stated when the pizza man arrived they were in a full lockdown. Mr. Tatum stated and that is when they left the building. Mr. Benaquista stated they were in modified lockdown when they were bringing the kids back to the gym. Mrs. Ruiz stated I was under the impression when any building is in a full lockdown, it is no one in and no one out. Once someone got out bringing

them back in seems (a) counterintuitive and (b) to me you failed, you broke the protocol at this point – someone got out and you are forcing them back in. Mr. Tatum stated the district procedure did not call for that at all. It seems like and I'm saying this from me that the blame is being pushed off onto other people because I can say the police department did something, the police department is saying the prosecutor's office did it but by the same token, in our process, unless we are evacuating the entire building to an evacuation site, for whatever reason it may be, once they are in the building you are correct they stay in the building. We have staff members that know all those protocols I'm talking about. The fact that students exited the building and some of them we understand went to other schools like Burnet. I understand Club Metro also. I think as much as we work together with the Town, emergency management, we always end up talking about contingencies just like this. As we move forward that is another contingency. First responders' procedures are sometimes or most of the time different from ours. If they decide they are going in, someone was telling me today that lives in the area near the high school, they saw police with rifles drawn which is something I can't order. The question becomes do they know what our expectations are if something like that would happen again.

Mrs. Ruiz stated you said we will be using Genesis to improve communications, so that will be used during the incident to send out notice to parents? Do we have a communication team? Who is going to send out that message? I'm afraid of five different people sending out messages. Mr. Benaquista stated right now everything will go through Mr. Tatum or his designee. As far as the one who will be putting it into the system, the first person will have backup but will be Ann Hart. The first thing that will happen is you will get a reverse 911 saying please check Genesis so that is for parents. Obviously, as we play with this and if we feel we need to change it we will but that is the most secure way to get it to the parents, children and staff.

Dr. Francis stated in the high school, are the doors with the exception of the front door are they alarmed? I'm asking because I have a patient who used to work in the high school and she said she would leave the building to go to a doctor's appointment and she would leave through the side and she was concerned because anybody can open that door up and let someone in – anywhere. She said in the elementary schools if you leave out the side doors there is an alarm. I think to be proactive and at medical school a lot of the doors are magnetized and during emergencies they become un-magnetized and you are allowed to go in and out. I think that is something we should look at. I wanted to bring that to your attention. Mr. Benaquista stated I will speak with the building principal and see what he is doing. My understanding is our buildings have the capability of doing what you are talking about.

Mr. Tatum stated going out of the schools there are particular doors I would go through. At Livingston School, I went through the side door and set the alarm off. At Burnet I go through the front. Mr. Benaquista stated I will follow up.

Mrs. Ruiz stated lunch money – my favorite thing. Mr. Benaquista stated as far as the number I gave last week, right now it is approximately the same. What we focused on last year's free and reduced numbers and saying what happened, what changed for these kids not to be free and reduced this year. Through those efforts and contacting those people, the initial answer was that 30% of the families responded and have been approved. That equals 50 kids. Right there

we changed 50 kids under free. Dr. Morgan asked did they have balances? Mr. Benaquista stated I didn't get that far into it but they have free designations and now we covered ourselves but I bet you that they did have some balances. Dr. Morgan stated did you ask parents why they did not fill out an application – did they not have access to a computer? Mr. Benaquista stated I will find out if that was part of it.

Mrs. Ruiz stated for those 50 students that we now know are free and reduced, if those students have a balance, can we recoup that balance or is there a time limit that we get cut off. Dr. Morgan stated we can't that is lost and that is our fault. Mr. Benaquista stated I can get some data to see what it equates to. It is worth the effort. Moving forward we will follow up on it and not just send them home. I would like to know if they were given to the students; we will follow up and piggy back and grow from there to make sure we are following up every year on everyone. That is our target audience right there as well as expanding from there.

We also increased 23.5% in participation in My School Bucks. It is important because it is another way to reach the parents with the balances that are low or in the red. We are pushing for 100% of School Bucks. Dr. Morgan stated I got a call today that my kid had a negative \$13.00 – bad mommy. Mr. Benaquista stated I think that means our principals are putting some plans in place and the follow-up we will get there. We probably should have done it a while ago. It is showing right now that it is not increasing. Our balances aren't increasing and we are reducing it.

Our future steps – Ms. Hart is sending out the weekly emails to specific families as far as who have accounts in red. We will continue to target those. Also the building principals are getting the list and we are going to get it more personable specifically with phone calls and trying to figure out why they can't pay or what they need to do and keep that communication going to try to get them to understand what is understanding and try to correct it.

Additionally we are still attempting to rewrite the Genesis file in nutrikids, where the email addresses for school messenger, automatic generated email for the parents and linking those systems together. The auto generated letters will be sent from nutrikids system and allowing the district to have more follow-up with the accounts that are in red. We are trying to get them to work together and we are still working on it. Flow from nutrikids into Genesis and automatically send out those notifications.

Mrs. Ruiz stated we had a parent that raised a concern about food allergies. With the old vendor, the food allergy would pop up when they went to buy lunch. Did we ever follow up with Pomptonian to see if that is a capability that they have. Mr. Vieira stated the software hasn't changed. Pomptonian replaced Aramark but the nutrikids, pos system is the same. Mrs. Ruiz stated a parent raised a concern because it didn't seem like it was happening. Mr. Vieira stated it is happening. Mrs. Ruiz stated it will pop up when the students goes to purchase lunch? Mr. Vieira stated yes – just notify the cafeteria manager. Mr. Benaquista stated the first step is to the building principal saying this happened – can you check with the manager of that school and ask why because it is important.

Mrs. Moses stated the curriculum is not just what we are teaching in the classroom it has a lot to do with the culture and climate, supervisors, teachers, administrators and making sure that we provide equity in instruction for our students. We did a grant because we know strengthening teaching and helping teachers be leaders in their classroom and making sure kids are learning the standards and meeting them where they are. We decided to go for the grant and it is supported by the UTEA to help teachers become better teachers, strengthening the teachers, giving them an opportunity to go beyond what we have been doing in the past. We are coming out of the box. Our teachers have been doing a really nice job with our curriculum.

Mr. Nufrio and Dr. Morgan left meeting at 8:50 p.m.

I meet with teachers and the department supervisors and let them talk and get an idea of where they are going. We talk about the language that they need to use. When you teach our students the four skills – we have to learn them ourselves. The teachers are learning better to communicate with parents. The parents are aware that the teachers will adapt to their child. I hear a lot of the teachers ideas, it is more than the curriculum. There are so many ideas that go into curriculum. You need money and human resources to get the job done for our children. When kids feel safe, they can learn. When teachers feel safe, they can provide the nurturing and education. The curriculum is fine and the teachers know what to do and they are doing a really nice job. The data that we gave out in October spoke for itself. There were high increases and we are moving in curriculum. At the same time we have a lot of initiatives that we are putting in place. We are working with the State for three years not because we need help, we are working with them because we want to be better teachers and we want our kids to have more. We want to be in front with our students. Teachers are excited about that. They want that and they love their profession. They want to elevate in their profession and when they elevate so do our children.

Dr. Francis stated we talk about the demographic numbers – 45% African American, 30% Hispanics – I know last year you had Dr. Kapali come speak and that wasn't received very well by the staff. I think it is very important that you need culturally responsive teaching in this district. If I need it as a doctor to be culturally competent, I think it is important for staff as well. I don't care if it administrators, supervisors or teaching staff it needs to be done. Mrs. Moses stated absolutely.

From September until now, every administrator, we are going on the 4th and I attend with them, I sit with them from 8-4 and it is all about equity and cultural responsiveness. It is all about restorative practices. We are learning all of these things from September until now and we are putting it into practice. I do one-to-one when I sit with principals and I go about the curriculum because you can't teach until you know how to teach to the children that sit in front of you. We are doing all these things and learning all these new things that are here and relevant for today. One principal said to me, I have learned now that I can't yell, I have to listen more to the children because that is what I'm here for. When we had Dr. Kapali who is renown and has gone to many schools; it wasn't received because people took it personal. It was a personal kind of feeling. I didn't understand that but now I do because if you don't have the teaching before you get to the experience of someone else then you are afraid of that. The principals are learning things so next year we are taking all supervisors and teachers to the same experience because all of this is a process. You can't do it in one shot. You can't bring someone in to talk about

cultural awareness and responding to the culture and when I sit with the principals and they understand that cultural responsiveness is not about the color of Annie Moses skin, it is the culture of maybe my hair, why the kids have to have their iPods in their ear, why they wear a do rag – that is a culture for them and you have to understand to be able to respond to that culture in a way that it doesn't shut down the learning that they have to do in the world. You are absolutely right and we are working on it. It is so connected to curriculum. We are working really hard on that. I know the struggles that I had when I came up here with the unit plans and all these things. But now the teachers know the unit plans are great but guess what the only thing is the standards are the standards until the State changes them. What I will change are the resources that I use to teach to the children that sit in front of me every day. It is what the parents can see from this time to that time my kids should be able to do all of this. It is a percentage of where they are and then that is where RTI comes in. I met with the RTI teachers and we went over how it is being implemented and data is very important. How they are consultants as well as teachers because (1) they don't give grades, (2) they don't have independent meetings with parents, they sit in as a consultant and they are the data collectors and they are the ones that I would call and say let me see all your tier threes; let me see how many assessments you have done; let me see the area of the math and reading – let me see that information. We are not going to keep kids in a box. Once you have the taste of success in learning, you will always want it and that is the key of curriculum and that is what we are doing in our district.

There will be a big shift in the district. In 2021-2022, seven areas will be revised and written. It will have to be in place 2020-21. We are on top of the computer piece of it because we know that gifted is not just about math and reading, it is more about kids that are gifted in art, music and sports. Curriculum piece – Union has that down pat. It is not just curriculum – curriculum is the teacher, the supervisor, the administrator, myself, Mr. Tatum, parents – we are the curriculum too. We will be bringing people in to speak more about cultural responsiveness because I think it is very important. It is not just about Hispanic, white, black – it is more. Our kids today are so diverse and we miss it if we don't get with them and understand it because some of us may not understand it. A kid is a kid but what has changed is the world that they live in. A kid wants love, feel safe, mischievous – all the things that we did but the world that they live in is different. The young man that said social media is our life. We can't control that. We don't own it. They love it that is their world and that is the way it is. That is what we are working on restorative practice and cultural responsiveness in connection with our curriculum. We are doing a good job with our curriculum. We are doing project based learning. The teachers and supervisors are moving classes in the direction that is more relevant for our students – statistics of sports, creative art – they might want it because they have a vision of what it is, the concept will draw you in. This is the world they live in.

Even our kindergarten assistants go for training and training on their own, in school, they are involved unlike it was before because it takes a village. We will have to keep moving, we can never fall back because the next generation is coming in and moving faster.

Dr. Francis stated I went to school here, graduated from Union High School and I wasn't always the best student. I had a behavioral problem. If I was in this era I would have had ADHD or some kind of ADD diagnosis because I let my behavior get in the way of my learning.

I was very destructive to the class, to teachers and they were less tolerant. I had been sent to the office a number of times. It wasn't until I got into 9th grade and I had Mrs. Whitiker and I had algebra; I always knew I was smart, school was boring to me but it wasn't until I did very well, I said from that point on I was going to try to make the first honor roll that marking period and that was what I did for the rest of the time. The grades started to count and they follow you. My mother didn't graduate high school, she dropped out. My dad graduated high school but they weren't talking to me about college. I had the option to go to college but it wasn't until I had a job that I felt that this is not what I want to do. I decided that I would apply to Rutgers and that is what I got into. I had the option to do that. Sometimes you take options away from kids where they don't have that option. I had that option and when I see past reunions and they say what are you doing and I say I'm a physician – you're a physician? Because they know me as being that bad kid because I was. I want to tell you from 3rd grade to 4th grade, the teachers talk and they said that Francis boy is a bad kid and that travels.

I want to say about the culturally responsive thing – I can talk about Mr. Murphy because he is retired – I had him, he taught us in 10th grade “Black American Writers” and that was the only course that was given about black Americans' contribution in terms of the art of writing and that stuff. I know that something happened during that meeting with Kapali but I would say that he is not a racist at all. I think he probably felt that he didn't need that; maybe some other people needed that but he didn't need Dr. Kapali to come and teach him something that he already knew and understood. I say that because he was one of the best teachers I had in high school. Mrs. Moses stated in our media center, we purchased by the State a lot of books that speaks to diversity, the life and family styles of relevance of today from pre-k all the way up. It is part of our comprehensive equity plan and it is very important. Those books are not only for students but for teachers to read too. You can't fall back. You have to fill the media center up with books that have relevance for students when they have situations that are real life and they can go and read about it and talk about it. It doesn't have to be on your English read list, it should be at your fingertips at the school library. We are looking at things a whole lot different throughout New Jersey. You know Mr. Murphy better than I do but I heard really good things about him and maybe that is the way he felt. Still we have to be comfortable because we are in front of children and sometimes our children feel that way and we can't get offensive and say I'm not like that – this is what the child is seeing. You can talk it but you need to show me. Old school you can talk it but you need to walk it. I think that is where we are moving with curriculum. I'm happy with that. We have a lot of things that speak to all children but we need to keep it going. It is a school community. We have to look like a community – we should all be working together for the greater good of the children. They need to see that because this world will be theirs and they need to work with all people as well.

Mr. Tatum stated I think when we talk about a shift in mindset, for many years it was always about is he smart? The real ask is how smart is he? If you really look at how the world has changed and changing right around us, especially some of us that are aging right now, but we can no longer take an approach to ask the question is he smart or do the assessment because I can tell you first handed – the way classrooms look today, they look nothing like back when I was teaching. I was at Connecticut Farms the other day with a little girl sitting on the floor and she was telling me what she was doing and it wasn't a teacher saying get off the floor and into your seat, it was about the teacher facilitating and having this organization in the classroom. What I

know about children and development, what we saw wasn't a show because you can't establish a routine like that because you know someone is coming. We saw that across the district in different situations where children were really involved in the learning process as opposed to be lectured to which is the way a lot of us learned. Mrs. Minneci stated it was like we weren't even there.

Mr. Tatum stated the students told me and showed me what they were doing and that is the shift in the way kids learn. As a teacher, it was very difficult to shift from being the instructor to a facilitator who facilitated learning. It wasn't until I started teaching 5th grade that I really understood that. I worked with 2nd graders, you are spoon feeding them, you want to make sure they have the concept down. It is low level teaching which you lay the foundation but the reality is they have to be able to walk through and feel it and that is what I'm seeing in our classrooms right now. That is a step in the right direction.

I want to talk about your teacher you spoke about. After the incident he, on his own, came to see me. He sat with me for two hours after school. When he left me, if there was any doubt on who he was or what his intent was, he convinced me that what people were training him to be was not what he was. We had some very candid conversations. I didn't know him well but from our conversations and dialogue, it was more like a stimulus and response. Anything I brought up, he had an answer to. It was a great conversation. I remembered when he retired he came back again and said to me, I'm going to do you a big favor and he handed me his letter, he said look at my salary, you can take this off the books now – he was a very nice gentleman.

Mrs. Minneci stated I have been at several meetings where they were talking about the Census 2020 – it will affect us so some of the things that they asked as a district, they already reached out to the PTA's, to have computers available because they are going to send out a card and gives instructions and most of it is going to be done online. We know that not everyone has a computer so they asked if we could set up certain times in different schools and to encourage them to register and count everybody. The next census won't be for 10 years. By that time they will be in our schools. They want to encourage people not to be afraid because none of this information is used for any other reason, just a count. No one will come to your door and pull you away and that is what we want to convey. So we will have places for our parents to come to register for the Census. The library also will be available for people. I think the senior center will be another place to go and probably the Vauxhall Library.

Mrs. Ruiz stated will we have individuals that can assist those that don't speak English. Mrs. Minneci stated yes. Mrs. Ruiz stated that is important, it can be very intimidating. Mrs. Minneci stated that is why they want to get the schools involved.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I'm part of the Perth Amboy 2020 count everyone committed because we are a community based organization, we are an entrusted partner with the community and we partner with other community based organizations and we applied for a grant and it gave us enough money to have tablets. We can have makeshift kiosks so once the Census rolls out a client comes into our agency for one thing, we say hey did you do the Census and if they say no, we have a designated employee to assist. Also seniors, because it is online it can be intimidating.

Just to have a trusted face and I think PTA Presidents are a great idea. For the parents not involved in PTA, we have to think about how to get those parents. Mrs. Minneci stated most people will be able to do it at home but for those that don't have computers or want some help, that is why we will open up our schools.

Mrs. Ruiz stated if you don't have every head counted, they are going to say why does Union Township need more money.

Mr. Tatum stated the next item is COVID-19. I just received something today and I shared it with Mr. Benaquista and Mrs. Moses. It is from the County. Now there is a travel ban on trips to China and I do know that we cancelled our trip but there are also other guidance. We have to make sure we sit with our attorneys for a policy because the deadline in March 3rd. Mrs. Cappiello stated it is March 3rd but I don't know if we have to do an actual policy change at that time, we just have to draft something.

Mrs. Ruiz asked what does the policy speak of? Mr. Benaquista stated they want you to embed it in your communicable disease policy as well as your home instruction due to health condition policy because if someone is out. On top of that the County is asking us to send in this form back to them to show that we complied. We do have the policies, Diane dug them up today as well as we have some drafts from Strauss Esmay. We do have to document a summary of the policy if different than the Strauss or School Board's. They also sent us a pandemic and influenza planning checklist to guide us as well as part of the County Superintendent's email. We got it late today and we are on top of it. They are gearing up because they say it is going to hit. If it hits the schools, we are as prepared as possible.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I saw that the CDC top officials stated that schools need to be prepared for tele-schooling and it is not whether it is going to happen, it is just a matter of when it is going to happen which will cause extreme panic across the country. I am opposite of an alarmist but it is a concern so I agree that we have to draft it. That policy about home instruction, is it going to address tele-schooling and do we have the capability to do tele-schooling? Mrs. Moses stated we have Google Classroom.

Mr. Benaquista stated based on population, and I was at a meeting two days ago, and one district was already sharing. If someone did travel to China, they are supposed to quarantine for 14 days at home. That is if the parents are telling us that they went there. This one district that has a high Asian population was speaking about it and they found out some of their kids went after the fact and the parents didn't communicate that. Also, a lot of it is whoever is traveling there, or just family that traveled there, it is important to share that information too. It is about educating our community that if this happens, you need to communicate with the school that you traveled there. We won't know if we don't have that information. That is the hard part with this, it can get into our environment and schools.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I had an employer today quarantine an employee who just came back from Italy until they are cleared because there are cases in Italy but not like in China. We have another trip to London and Scotland are late July. We have to keep that on our radar.

Dr. Francis stated it is not really affecting children, it is affecting more of the 40 and older. If you have some cohort problems like COPD, asthma, diabetes – you are more at risk. They can probably get it and transmit it but it is the older people. Masks are for those that are sick should wear them. The flu kills more than this virus. You have to remember we had the West Nile virus, the SARS virus, the bird flu, H1N1, swine flu.

Comments from Public:

Ann Margaret Shannon stated I heard the pre-k registration for next year is a lot – is it bigger numbers next year? Mrs. Moses stated it is an increase. Ms. Shannon asked do you think there are more classes than in schools? Mrs. Moses stated we have an outside provider. Ms. Shannon stated regarding the grade level configuration, in your research have you considered a dedicated pre-k center? Mr. Tatum stated that is something we are talking about. Because of the transportation that happens with pre-k, it will have less of an impact on our budget because it is part of the pre-k grant. We are talking about it so there is a possibility but nothing is definitive right now. Every building we use has to be specified to the way the State wants it.

Ms. Shannon stated as far as the lockdown, I visited Union High School the next Monday to see how everyone was doing and I talked to the members and every single member I talked to said they felt safe during the lockdown and I shared that with Mr. Hoyt. Not knowing what actually happened, it sounds like a very good job well done.

Mrs. Moses mentioned the grant, if done correctly it should be a hit. However, board to work it is dependent on common planning time and right now the way the middle schools have an actual designated planning time, so I'm just asking that we you talk about school schedules that you look to the middle school as an example and we should have common planning time in every school, grade, every discipline because I'm afraid that the specials might get left out of the arts. When you look I hope we have some common planning time.

Cultural competency – the national education association of New Jersey and the NJEA – a lot of us go to a lot of training and recently I went to DC and whenever I see a good speaker I try to pass it along. We are always trying to reach out and find some resources.

Read across America – one thing I don't think people know is national has disbanded from Dr. Seuss and one of the reasons is there are many political reasons but it was always geared to elementary and Rich and I are on the national committee and the theme is “nation of diverse readers”. They have different books and free lesson plans on the website.

Terry Cuccinello stated we touched upon the telephone system grant and also safety in the schools. I have a concern about the school that I work in that the intercom system is so antiquated that when one of the secretaries is on the intercom phone and a teacher in another classroom is trying to call in, I cannot answer that call. My fear is if there is an emergency, there is no way I can find out what is going on in that classroom. I hope you are looking into that because it is an extreme concern. Mr. Tatum asked has that been reported to maintenance and Mr. Matthews? Mr. Benaquista stated I haven't heard anything. Mrs. Cuccinello stated I sent an email to Mr. Tatum. Mr. Tatum stated I don't remember it. Mr. Benaquista stated tell Mr. Matthews to reach out to us. Mr. Tatum stated I don't know if a work order has been put in. Mrs. Cuccinello stated I think it is the system itself. I will talk to Mr. Matthews.

The other thing is the ESS program from my perspective. It is not working. We are consistently short, we have to be creative with our coverages. The list is a mile long but we just aren't getting the individuals to come. We also lost a really good substitute because whatever their standards are they require her to get recertified and fingerprinted at her cost and she decided to go to Roselle Park and they took her right away.

The other issue was I spoke to a substitute today and she pays \$5.00 to get notification of schools that need help. She does not get any of Washington School. I don't know what the problem is there. She is not getting any notification for Washington School. Please revisit ESS.

John Zurka stated teacher at Jefferson School. I'm a proud union activist. I also want to piggy back on the ESS situation. I can't speak for other schools but what you are saying is also going on at Jefferson School. We are constantly being under covered. Specials are being cancelled because they are taking subs that are in for special area teacher and put them in for a regular teacher and we are losing our preps, losing our specials. Personally this week my partner teacher went uncovered. Across the hall, same day, went uncovered. Sometimes my para doesn't get covered for her breaks or her lunches. Yesterday there were two ESS substitutes sitting in the teacher's room the lunch before mine, my lunch and the lunch after mine. They are not being monitored. We are not getting the quality of people we used to get when we hired our substitutes. I'm still going to fight for what I believe is right in our schools.

Lydia stated hopefully I'm not being cut again in the budget. As John said, I'm not being covered, I'm still working full-time hours and I'm supposed to be part-time. I do have to get a family leave, my dad is sick, and I'm worried about my children not having the right person cover me. The other day someone came to give me a break and I said we need help in writing and she looked at me like what and then she said I can come back later. She left and when she came back at 1:00 p.m., we were doing writing again. It is hard. I know two of my substitutes and when they went through some kind of training, they were told that if you are doing a morning job then you are done, you go back to the office and ask. The one day they called the ESS lady and said you need to come cover, I'm sorry I didn't know I had to cover you, I had a job in the morning and then I was not told what to do. They are on more breaks than I am. Mr. Tatum stated obviously the schedule would identify the amount of classes that they are teaching. Back to John, whenever we had substitutes in the building, we would say cover this class, this class and this class so we reuse those subs. My question I would raise here is whether or not when they are being assigned and I know in the morning it is difficult sometimes to go over the schedule but even throughout the course of the day, monitoring where these people are at least for now before we do anything else – who they are and who they are in for.

Mr. Zurka stated if they are in for paraprofessional coverage, there are co-teaching classrooms that are uncovered which is against code, can they go in for an hour and help out? Mr. Tatum stated they are contractual as you know and there are contractual obligations. Even when we were hiring our own subs, we would give it to them if we could but we have to have person less lunch and not break a labor law after x-number of hours – we would use them throughout the entire day. I can't see why we can't do that. It is a days' pay. Mr. Zurka stated but three lunch periods. Mr. Tatum stated my concern about that is and I don't want to get into

who is not doing what but at the end of the day, I know if I was the principal and you tell me you have three people and I have classes uncovered, I'm going to the teacher's room and say I don't know what you are doing there but there are open classrooms. I don't know if there is miscommunication, but it's not the three people in the teacher's room, it is the classes that are not covered.

Donna Senkiw stated I have been told that if I sign up as an ESS para I can't go in a classroom because they get different payment. Mrs. Minneci stated we need to get back to order here.

Kelly Osborne stated I'm a paraprofessional at Battle Hill School and I'm a building rep as well. From what I was discussing with some of the ESS employees, they have a pay scale and it will confuse their payroll so this is the reason why they are unable to utilize that person in the building because they are afraid to mess up payroll for their company. Even if the employee wants that position, they have too much confusion in their payroll. That is how it was explained to me. In Battle Hill School we are separating the weak; we have good people from ESS. We bring them in and try to train them the best of our ability. Some are willing to do the diaper changing, deal with behavioral issues, to deal with the child that may have writing needs or walking needs or whatever it may be. We spend the time; they're willing to learn, we are willing to train. We are doing it on our own. The teachers are putting in the time. Then you have the people that come in and spend three minutes looking at an IEP for two children, sign off on the IEP and sit there and use their phone. In some cases they have been found sleeping with the phone in their hand. They are not being reported because the teacher feels uncomfortable reporting this to administration. When it is brought to my attention, I tell people that it offends me put that phone away. We are teaching and the child is being discouraged from paying attention to us and distracted at the same time. Their comment to me is I know I'm just checking my email. There is a lack of respect in a lot of way going on in the building. We are separating the weak from the chaff. We are trying to train and trying to get the best we can out of them. Unfortunately, ESS employees have found other agencies are paying more and we are losing one of our finest ones tomorrow. A woman we trained for three months, who is doing fantastic, whose child is growing and the other child is improving every day, we are losing her because of the payroll system at ESS. Despite all the insurances that you gave me Mr. Tatum, that company has failed us terribly.

We also have a problem with the scheduling, when those people do come in part-time but when they come in late, district employees pick up that slack. We are picking up the 5, 10, 15, 25 minutes and picking up the slack because that child cannot be left unattended.

We have paras that simply refuse, come in and turn their lip up at a self-contained class – that is unacceptable. You don't belong in a school for special needs children. We had one gentleman come in for half a day, walked into the office, handed in the key and said he was leaving. He was unaware of what he was really supposed to do.

Mr. Benaquista stated I have to speak my mind. You guys are coming down on ESS, that is fine. But I'm telling you right now, when I controlled these employees when they were hired under us, I had people that said to me I can't work with this kid because of that IEP. It happens

on both ends. Don't tell me it doesn't happen on both ends. I have had people come to me and I will not work in that situation because of that kid's IEP and that is humiliating and that was our employee. Get your facts straight.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Ruiz, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:45 p.m. All present voting YES MOTION CARRIED

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

MANUEL E. VIEIRA
BOARD SECRETARY