

The following is a summary of the November 12, 2020, Combined Conference and Regular Meeting of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education:

Mr. Doug Reinstein, President of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education, opened the meeting by announcing that the Berkeley Heights Diversity Council is inviting the public to its first Listening Session, focused on Diversity and the Berkeley Heights Public Schools, on Wednesday, November 18th at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom. Please click [here](#) for more information about this event.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Melissa Varley, Superintendent of Schools, provided the following report:

The last several weeks have been very challenging as the District has been trying to deal with the fallout of the COVID 19 outbreak that was ignited by student parties over Halloween weekend.

As of this morning we have 48 students in the district who have tested positive:

43 at GL
4 at CMS
1 at MP

In addition, there are 297 GLHS students who are quarantined due to coming into contact with a positive case. I want to make sure we understand that GL is remote, and not quarantined. People who are quarantined are not allowed to leave their house. The majority of GL students are able to leave their houses as they did not come into contact with a positive case. There are also 48 K-8 students who are quarantining due to having a sibling in school who has tested positive. Finally, there are 63 staff members who are currently quarantining due to coming into contact. I would like to thank Dr. Janosko and the district pandemic team. They did incredible work in contacting each one of these families over the course of the last week.

For those of you who have been following the reports on the number of district cases, there was a drastic increase on Tuesday. This increase was due to a delay in the reporting from the Westfield Department of Health which services Mountainside. Berkeley Heights receives its reports from the Union County Health Department.

The vast majority of our cases are a direct result of the several Halloween parties. However, we are also finding that some are community-spread positives. This means that an individual who was not at the Halloween parties, contracted the virus during the asymptomatic period from a person who had attended the parties; and we know of no cases in the schools that were contacted prior to the Halloween parties.

Superintendent's Report (continued)

I realize that many people are questioning why the district is not moving all students to remote learning. Right now, the data does not support this decision. All five of the K-8 students were part of cohort B, who tested positive for the virus after their last day of school on October 30. When this timeline is combined with the fact that there have been no further positives in the K-8 population it means that the student population has not been in contact with these students since they tested positive. We know that students are best served by being in school, and we know that the spread of the virus is minimized by plastic barriers and mask wearing. For these reasons, and unless and until the data changes, we are planning to keep the K-8 schools open for in-person instruction.

We are hopeful that we will be able to return GLHS to in-person instruction on November 19th. However, this decision will depend on the number of GLHS students who are still positive at that time, and if the GLHS rate of positives is increasing or decreasing.

I want to reiterate that students in schools who maintain a level of social distance and wear masks are safe. Sad experience has taught us how quickly an outbreak can spread. The consequences of poor choices and relaxing our guard can be devastating. With Thanksgiving fast approaching, and college students returning home, please be sure to social distance, wear your masks, and remain vigilant. We are working hard to keep students safe and schools open, but we cannot do it without your help.

As I am sure you are aware, this past Thursday the district received a screenshot of a vile racist and homophobic Instagram account using the GLHS logo. This is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The GLHS administration is continuing to investigate this bias incident and we have turned over all information to the BHPD. The district has been working hard to make sure that all students feel safe and included. While it is disheartening to think that one or more of our students would make an account that strives to divide us, we will not let it defeat us. Instead, I would like to focus on and commend all those who had the courage to stand up and say that these actions are unacceptable and are not the values of our community.

There are two presentations scheduled for this evening. The first, is now a very timely presentation on the District Diversity Initiative. It is my hope that everyone will see the proactive steps that the district has been taking to address these issues. The second presentation focuses on the District's instructional efforts during the pandemic.

On a lighter note, following the presentations there will be a BOE discussion about snow days. I am of the opinion that snow days are one of the joys of childhood. There are three snow days built into the calendar, and I would like to recommend that these three days be retained in the calendar. If we go over those three days none would be added, if we do not use them they would be returned at the end of the year as per our normal past practice.

Superintendent’s Report (continued)

Dr. Melissa Varley, District Supervisor Stephen Hopkins, and District Director of Elementary Education Marybeth Kopacz presented a report to the Board of Education about the goals and objectives of Diversity Committees in the Berkeley Heights Public Schools, as well as ongoing activities being sponsored by these committees and the Diversity Action Teams. Governor Livingston High School students Mackenzie Pierce, Sara Fajardo, and Alyssa Pradhan also provided a wealth of information about how students at the high school and middle school levels will be a driving force in the implementation of activities and programs sponsored by the Diversity Committees and Action Teams. Please click [here](#) to read more about this presentation.

Assistant Superintendent Scott McKinney and Marybeth Kopacz delivered a presentation to the Board of Education titled “Curriculum and Instruction During a Global Pandemic: Using Data to Identify Gaps, Differentiate Instruction, and Meet Student Needs.” Please click [here](#) to learn more about this report.

Report of the Student Representatives

Emily Haines reported on the following:

- Even with everything up in the air at the moment, there is hope that there may be a few games left in some of the seasons. As of now, the seasons that have been going on have been very successful. The GL Football team won the conference championship and they currently have a 4-1 record. Highlander Girls Soccer has a 4-4 record and are awaiting the news if they are allowed to compete in the state tournament. The GLHS Boys Soccer team finished its season with a record of 5-2-2. And finally, Highlander Field Hockey completed its season with a 3-4 record. Winter Sports sign-ups and interest meetings are beginning for Fencing, Wrestling, Track, and Basketball. Many are anxiously awaiting the decisions regarding the next sports season.
- The GL students are excited to hear about the possibility of watching Highlander sports online through a live broadcasting channel. The specifics are not yet known, but this will help keep the GL Spirit alive. Go GL!
- As for the new school schedule at Governor Livingston, even though it has only been a few days it has been working well. There have been many positive opinions on the progression. In my opinion the days aren’t as tiring and stressful and allow for a better learning environment. Also, the lab addition after lunch allows for the extra time desperately needed for science and AP classes.

Report of the Student Representatives (continued)

Thomas Burke reported on the following:

- With sports being temporarily put on hold at GL, many students have taken a greater involvement in clubs.
- Model UN held its introductory meeting recently and is now working with members to assign them to different delegations for upcoming conferences. TSA held its first meeting of the year where they explained to new members the events of the club and future activities. Math League held its second competition of the year this past week and the Spanish Club is holding “Cena y Cine” - Dinner and a Movie, this week. The Science Olympiad team leadership informed its members that there will only be a state level competition, not a regional event, and it will be held virtually in March or April.
- Throughout November, GLHS is working to spread awareness of various cultures, groups, and people. Guidance Counselors have posted information to students about the various holidays occurring around the world this month, including Day of Tradition celebrated in Argentina, Transgender Day of Remembrance celebrated internationally, and Diwali celebrated in India. The Understanding Asian Cultures club is also working to spread awareness of Diwali by preparing a video that will teach others about Diwali and even feature individuals celebrating the event.
- Yesterday, the National Honor Society offered membership to qualified juniors and seniors selected by the Faculty Council. The National Honor Society now joins other honor societies such as Science Honor Society and the Math Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, that have welcomed new members and are now preparing for a formal induction ceremony next month.
- Student Auxiliary is supporting Mrs. Wranitz, GL Social Studies Teacher, in her Wranitz Family Fundraiser Virtual 5K. This event is raising funds for Mrs. Wranitz’ daughter, who is currently battling cancer. The month-long virtual fundraiser allows people to walk, run, or bike in support of the Wranitz family.

Facilities Report

Donna Felezzola, School Business Administrator, presented the following report:

Large rooftop exhaust fans have been installed at the Columbia Middle School multipurpose room, Thomas P. Hughes School multipurpose room, and both gyms at Governor Livingston. This will greatly improve the air circulation in those spaces and adjoining hallways and classrooms.

The repair of window springs in the school buildings is continuing.

Our maintenance staff is installing LED lighting in the Columbia multipurpose room and hallways. Additionally, they have replaced the lighting at the exterior of all schools. This project is an upgrade to current lighting, reduces energy costs, and the cost of supplies will be reimbursed by the New Jersey SmartStart program.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following:

- The introduction for study and first reading of the following revised District Bylaw and Policy:
Board Member Qualifications and Code of Ethics 0142
Gifted and Talented Pupils 2464
- The following new District Guideline/Policy:
14-Day Quarantine for Employees upon Return from Travel/COVID-19 Incoming Travel Advisory Directive
- Professional development days and travel reimbursement for district staff members.
- The Uniform State Memorandum of Agreement Between Education and Law Enforcement Officials, 2020 Revisions, as signed by the Union County Acting Prosecutor, Berkeley Heights Chief of Police, Union County Interim Executive Superintendent of Schools, President of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education, and Superintendent of the Berkeley Heights Public Schools.
- The School Self-Assessments for Determining Grades under the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act for each school in the Berkeley Heights School District for the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, as presented to the Board of Education at its meeting on October 8, 2020.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following (continued):

- The Agreement with the Union County Educational Services Commission to provide a maximum of 20 psychological and educational assessments, as needed, during the 2020-2021 school year at the cost of \$420.00 per evaluation and a total maximum cost of \$8,400.00.
- The Agreement with Educere Virtual Education/Founders Education to provide Virtual Home Instruction services to Berkeley Heights Public Schools students during the 2020-2021 school year at the cost of \$29.00 per student/per course/per week. These services would be needed only when the district is unable to provide Home Instruction services through its own group of instructors.
- The employment of substitute/supplemental personnel for the 2020-2021 school year.
- The employment of Bindu Pariyacheri as a Long-Term Substitute Teacher, effective November 13, 2020.
- Modified leave of absence requests from district staff members during the 2020-2021 school year.
- The retirement of Erich Wiehl from his position with the District Central Maintenance Staff, effective January 1, 2021.
- The employment of Leslie Goncalves as a Paraprofessional at Governor Livingston High School, effective October 26, 2020.
- For Jeannette Gates and Tara Pirozzoli, Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultants in the Berkeley Heights Public Schools, to conduct learning evaluations outside of school hours for high school students whose evaluations were postponed due to the closing of schools from March through August 2020.
- The resignation of Lisa Ferrari from her position as Teacher of Music at Mountain Park School, effective November 24, 2020.
- The resignation of Matthew Rosenthal from his position as Instructional Review Teacher at Columbia Middle School, effective October 17, 2020.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following (continued):

- Revised/extended 2020-2021 employment contracts for the following staff members:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position/ School</u>	<u>Current 2020-2021 Contract</u>	<u>Revised 2020-2021 Contract</u>
Domenic Croce	Teacher of Music/ Columbia/GLHS	9/1/2020- 11/23/2020	9/1/2020- 1/4/2021
Christina Futterknecht	Elementary Counselor/ Woodruff	9/1/2020- 11/23/2020	9/1/2020- 6/30/2021
Bailey Krasovec	Teacher of English/ Columbia	9/1/2020- 11/9/2020	9/1/2020- 1/4/2021
Robert Schwerdt	Teacher of Physical Education/ Mountain Park	9/1/2020- 11/2/2020	9/1/2020- 4/5/2021
Kacie Worswick	Grade 1 Teacher/ McMillin ECC	9/1/2020- 11/2/2020	9/1/2020- 2/1/2021

- The emergency purchase of school desk barriers from Diamond Enterprises, Inc., to be used throughout the school district, at the cost of \$44,840.00.
- To purchase scalable cloud-based web filtering for every device in the school district from Securly, Inc., for the period of September 1, 2020, through August 31, 2021, at the cost of \$13,461.25.
- The 2020-2021 Lease Agreement with the Morris-Union Jointure Commission for use of the swimming facilities at the Developmental Learning Center by the Governor Livingston High School Swim Teams in the amount of \$5,643.00.
- The acceptance of Non-Public Security Aid for the 2020-2021 school year from the New Jersey Department of Education in the amount of \$2,275.00 for Diamond Hill Montessori School and \$5,775.00 for FlexSchool.
- To accept an increase of \$19,838.66 in Union County CARES Act Subaward funding to be used for COVID-19 related expenses in the Berkeley Heights Public Schools.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following (continued):

- The submission of the application to the New Jersey Department of Education for the Alyssa's Law School Security Grant in the amount of \$147,109.00.
- To accept the district's Comprehensive Maintenance Plan for actual 2019-2020, Current 2020-2021, and Planned 2020-2021.
- The emergency repairs and installation of New Caldwell Ultra Lifts for windows at Thomas P. Hughes School and Columbia Middle School in the amount of \$29,066.00.

The Board of Education will conduct a Combined Conference and Regular Meeting on Thursday, December 3, 2020, at 7:30 p.m.