

The following is a summary of the January 7, 2021, Combined Conference, Regular Meeting and Organization Meeting of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education:

Superintendent's Report

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

Good Evening and Happy New Year. Welcome to the first meeting of 2021. I know everyone is hoping that we are in the home stretch of the Pandemic and that we will be on our way back to normal very soon. I also want to take a moment to acknowledge and welcome our new board members who are taking their seats tonight - Robert Cianciulli - who is rejoining us - and Joy Young, who is a first time BOE member. And Jordan Hyman, our new Mountainside Representative.

The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Task Force is being formed. We have enough parent volunteers, but are still looking for teachers, current students, and former students who would be interested in getting involved and volunteering their time and perspectives. If you are interested in helping us make Berkeley Heights Public Schools a more inclusive place, please email me to schedule a time to talk. The committee will be guided by Marc Strachan, the consultant who led the District DEI implicit bias training at the start of the school year.

An update on the status of the investigation regarding the recent Instagram posts discussed at the December 21st BOE meeting: By law, HIB incidents reported by current students must be investigated by the district's Anti-Bullying Specialists. Incidents that were reported by former students will be investigated by Cleary, Giacobbe, Alfieri and Jacobs, who specialize in education law. We are using an outside attorney to be transparent as possible. As of today, we have approximately 45 current and former students who spoke, posted, or both. There were many individuals who could not be identified. If a student wishes to report an allegation they may do so through the [district anonymous reporting system](#). If a former student has an allegation or a grievance they may use our attorney's email address to report it: BHFormerStudents@cgajlaw.com. Once the investigations are complete we will determine our next steps.

By January 25th, there will be two dedicated Gender Neutral Bathrooms at GLHS. This project has been in the works for some time, and I apologize that it was not up and running at the start of the school year. Unfortunately, it was one of the items that was delayed by the pandemic.

The District has been working very closely with the Berkeley Heights Diversity Council and they have asked me to announce that they will be holding an on-line celebration and day of service in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I encourage everyone to be involved, so please go to their website for more information <https://www.bhdiversity.org>.

Superintendent’s Report (continued)

The Winter Sports season is upon us! The start of the Ice Hockey season was delayed by COVID cases on our team from students in a partnering district, but they should be skating by January 15th. The Highlander Basketball and Fencing teams open the season on January 26th. Season 2A (Swimming, Indoor Track and Field) will begin on February 16th, and Season 3 (Volleyball and Wrestling) will begin on March 16th. Cheerleaders will cheer but they are only participating in the halftime show and will be competing virtually. We will be having a limited Middle School Sports schedule but it will not include any games against teams from outside the district.

We understand that having a sports season is an increased risk for students and coaches. However, the district also has a responsibility to educate the whole child and we believe that athletic competition is an important part of that mission. Building on the lessons learned from a successful Fall season, we believe that committing to a Winter Sports season that follows all NJSIAA guidelines and health and safety protocols is an acceptable level of risk that is in the overall best interests of our students. If at any point we feel that the calculated risk is not worth the overall benefit, then we will revisit this decision. Parents and students should also be aware that by participating in sports, they are increasing their exposure and may need to quarantine due to increasing their potential exposures.

I want to take a moment to remind everyone that although the light is at the end of the pandemic tunnel, we must continue to be vigilant and stay disciplined with our mask wearing and social distancing. I want to remind parents that they must inform their schools if their student tests positive for COVID and not rely on the DOH to inform us. The DOH has many cases it is dealing with and our notification might be delayed. We are all tired of the pandemic and its restrictions, but we also know that the results of letting our guard down can be devastating. If we all buckle down, we will get through this together.

Mr. Robert Cianciulli and Ms. Joy Young were administered the Oath of Office to serve three-year terms on the Board of Education. Ms. Young and Mr. Cianciulli were elected to the Board by the voters of Berkeley Heights in November 2020. Mr. Jordan Hyman was also administered the Oath of Office to serve as the Mountainside representative to the Board of Education.

Mr. Douglas Reinstein was elected once again by his colleagues on the Board of Education to serve as Board President for the coming year, while Mr. Michael D’Aquila was selected to serve as Board Vice-President during 2021.

Members of the Board of Education then adopted the Code of Ethics, as provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association, and approved the schedule of Board meetings for 2021.

Report of the Student Representatives

Emily Haines reported on the following:

- The Winter Sports Season at Governor Livingston High School will be starting in the upcoming weeks.
- The Highlander Ice Hockey is returning from a short break, and the GL Cheerleaders will start their season on Monday.
- Finally, the “third season” is being planned smoothly with the Highlander Indoor Track and Volleyball teams getting ready to compete during this newly-created season.

Thomas Burke reported on the following:

- In the week prior to winter break, clubs made the most of the last few days by hosting numerous events.
- FBLA members competed in the regional competitive events and experienced great success. Students placed first and third in the Securities and Investments exam and another placed second in the Business Law exam. The students will continue preparing for the state level competition in March.
- Student Auxiliary collected over 50 Care Packages for veterans and began sending Pen Pal letters to seniors in town.
- The Interact Club helped at the GLHS PTO clothing drive by collecting donated clothes.
- The Understanding Asian Cultures Club co-hosted a meeting with the organization Dear Asian Youth Union County, where they discussed the steps students would like to see from the administration in response to the stories shared by previous GL students.
- Turning to events that have occurred following the break, the Spanish Club is preparing a video where students share their holiday traditions.
- SAGA is creating an online information resource for faculty, students and whomever else where people can learn about the LGBTQ+ community or work to be a supportive ally. The club is also planning another round of lunch and learns to see if more teachers are interested in joining the newly formed Support Zone. Lastly, the club has created a form to collect members’ input on GL’s new gender neutral bathrooms and are meeting tomorrow to discuss this change.

Facilities Report

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

- The custodians and maintenance staff are using this time, with the students being remote, to catch up on building maintenance projects. They are doing preventative maintenance on equipment, exit lights have been replaced, roof top fans replaced and repaired, plumbing repairs have been made in the schools, painting projects have been initiated.
- The ceiling in the Columbia Middle School multipurpose room was replaced and LED lighting installed. The staff is now working on sanding and painting the stage floor.

The Board of Education formally voted to approve the following:

- The submission of the 2019-2020 School Nursing Services Plans from all six schools in the Berkeley Heights School District to the New Jersey Department of Education.
- The School Data Management Manual of the Berkeley Heights Public Schools for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.
- Professional development days and travel reimbursement for district staff members.
- Revised tentative 2020-2021 Winter season athletics schedules for teams representing Governor Livingston High School.
- The submission of the Amended Fiscal Year 2021 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) grant application to the New Jersey Department of Education.
- The recommendation for a modified Columbia Middle School 2021 Winter sports season.
- The following new courses at Governor Livingston High School starting in the 2021-2022 school year:
 - Race in America in the 21st Century
 - Roots and Rhythm: The History of Rap and Hip Hop Lyrics
- The Agreement with the Morris-Union Jointure Commission to provide Speech-Language Therapy services to students at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center for three days per week, when school is in session, from December 10, 2020, through January 15, 2021.
- The employment of substitute/supplemental personnel for the 2020-2021 school year.

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

- New and modified leave of absence requests from district staff members during the 2020-2021 school year.
- The retirement of Robert Segear from his position as Student Assistance Counselor at Governor Livingston High School and Columbia Middle School, effective February 28, 2021.
- The temporary revision of the employment contract of Lisa Wiater from full-time to part-time (50%), effective January 19, 2021, through May 4, 2021. Mrs. Wiater is a Secretary in the District Supervisors Office.
- Salary adjustments for district staff members, based on the professional growth of the employee, effective February 1, 2021.
- For Lydia Kang, Teacher of Mathematics at Columbia Middle School, to teach an extra class beyond her normal teaching schedule, effective February 1, 2021.
- The employment of Elizabeth DiGiovanni as a Substitute/Replacement Speech-Language Specialist at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center, effective January 19, 2021, through April 5, 2021.
- To revise the employment contract of Gianna Izzi, Paraprofessional at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center, from five days per week to three days per week, effective January 25, 2021, through June 30, 2021.
- The employment of Antonino Passalacqua as a Part-Time Paraprofessional at Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center, effective January 25, 2021, through June 30, 2021.

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

- Revised/extended 2020-2021 employment contracts for the following substitute/replacement teachers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position/School</u>	<u>Current Contract</u>	<u>Revised Contract</u>
Domenic Croce	Teacher of Music/ Gov. Livingston HS	9/1/2020- 1/4/2021	9/1/2020- 2/1/2021
David Hay	Teacher of Social Studies/ Columbia MS	9/1/2020- 1/4/2021	9/1/2020- 4/5/2021
Bailey Krasovec	Teacher of English/ Columbia MS	9/1/2020- 2/1/2021	9/1/2020- 2/1/2021

- The appointment of Extra-Curricular Activities personnel for the 2020-2021 school year:

Governor Livingston High School

Activity/Position

Volunteer Assistant Ice Hockey Coach
Volunteer Assistant Ice Hockey Coach

Instructor/Supervisor

Ryan Daly
Travis DiLello

- The acceptance of the Health and Safety Evaluation of School Buildings Checklist Statement of Assurance for the school year 2020-2021.
- The 2020-2021 regular school year transportation agreements with the Morris-Union Jointure Commission.
- The revised 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.

The Board of Education will conduct a Combined Conference and Regular Meeting on Thursday, February 4, 2021, at 7:30 p.m., via Zoom.