

The following is a summary of the September 23, 2021, Combined Conference and Regular Meeting of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education:

Superintendent's Report

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

The majority of tonight's Superintendent report will be devoted to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. The Task Force was created after the December 2020 Board meeting when it became apparent that there were deep seated systemic issues concerning Inclusion in our schools. From over 60 volunteers, we selected a representative body of Parents, Former Parents, Educators, Students, Former Students and Administrators. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge them individually for their efforts.

In addition to myself the Task Force Included:

- Steve Hopkins
- Toiya Facey
- Rachel Mehta
- Ramya Kasthuri
- Anjali Mehrotra
- Makalya Curtis
- Thomas Burke
- Rachel Erdreich
- Tara Mathias-Prabu
- Grace O'Brien
- Marissa Gold
- Patrice Silagi

The Task Force was chaired by Marc Strachan.

Since early March, members of the Task Force have met as much as twice a week in order to discuss difficult issues and craft achievable solutions in order to present the Board of Education with a DEI addition to the district strategic plan. It was not an easy process, but in the end I believe that the Task Force has created an important document that will celebrate the district's Diversity, help to provide Equity, and most importantly create an environment of Inclusion for all of our students. Again, thank you to everyone who gave their time and energy to make Berkeley Heights Public Schools a better place.

Before we move on to the DEI Task Force presentation, a few quick points.

I realize that many parents are upset about the travel quarantine guidelines. Please be aware that we have received written notification from the Department of Health that we should enforce all travel quarantines. As educators we are obligated to follow the directives of medical professionals. Mr. McKinney, who is in charge of the district's Covid response this year, has the recommended travel protocol documentation from both the CDC and DOH. As with all things related to the pandemic we will revisit our procedures on receiving new directives or when there is a change in our region's Covid status- which is currently rated as 'High'. As educators we are doing our best to balance keeping students and staff safe and providing the best possible

Superintendent's Report (continued)

education in a very difficult and uncertain time. Our initial intention in not providing remote instruction for students who had to quarantine because of travel restrictions was made to minimize disruption to instruction for all students. Having received feedback from numerous parents regarding this provision, the administrative team met yesterday and decided to amend our guidelines so that students who are on travel quarantine will receive remote instruction. However, students will not be allowed to be on remote instruction while they travel.

There has also been much discussion regarding the new Communication Specialist. One of the things parents have consistently asked for from the district is their desire for increased communication. To that end we looked to bring in the new Communication Specialist with a very different skill set from our current in-house specialist. This is not an increase in total hours, devoted to the position, just a different area of expertise to improve communication.

Finally, I would ask the Board of Education to make a decision regarding when they would like to have the Board training session that was postponed from July. Would they like to schedule the training for later in the Fall or after January, when the new Board members are sworn in.

I will now turn the presentation over to Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Strachan.

Student Representatives Report

Thomas Burke reported on the following:

As many of you know, this past weekend marked the annual Friday Night Lights and Saturday Night Lights. For students, it was an exciting experience as they could cheer on their friends as many teams continued their excellent form. The football team, though they took an early lead, lost against a well prepared Bernards. The next day, the field hockey team opened Saturday Night Lights with a tie giving them a record of 4-1-1. The boys soccer team followed with an emphatic 4-0 win over Cranford. The team is now on a three game win streak in great thanks to senior captain Alex Pitt, the leading goal scorer and leader of the young team. The girls soccer team ended the night with a close 1-0 win over Parsippany Hills. The team has won all three games since their opening loss while only conceding one goal since then. Switching to the girls tennis team, they have maintained an impressive undefeated start winning all of their first four matches. In their recent victory over Union Catholic, our own Katherine Zhou won in straight sets without giving up a game. The volleyball has nearly mirrored their success losing just one match and three sets in all of their six matches. The success of all teams is unprecedented and a tribute to countless hours athletes dedicated over the summer and after school. I don't want to get ahead of myself, but I think we can expect some new banners in the gym this year.

Student Representatives Report (continued)

Katherine Zhou reported on the following:

As September comes to a close, students and teachers have adjusted well to the in-person learning experience. While not everything is back to normal, many Pre-Covid activities are returning. Students have begun to work on group projects in-person at school for the first time in over a year, and lab periods have also started, so all science classes are extended once per schedule rotation. And through all of this, the GL spirit continues to show, even with face masks and social distancing in place. This week, the GL Student Council organized a Spirit Week, where students have been encouraged to wear sports jerseys, neon clothing, and GL colors.

Many other club activities at GL have also officially begun. The Environmental Club, Sexuality and Gender Acceptance Club, Newspaper Club, and others have already held in-person interest meetings to recruit new members and establish goals for the upcoming school year. The Model United Nations Club, specifically, held a Harry Potter themed mock conference to give new members an opportunity to see how a typical Model UN conference would be run.

The Governor Livingston Hilltop Players kick started their fall theatre season by holding an interest meeting this past Wednesday and announcing their fall production for this year. The production, called “The Show Must Go On!”, is a trio of plays about theatre, and it will be performed live in front of an audience in mid-November.

Other clubs have exciting plans for the upcoming weeks. The Student Movement Against Cancer Club, Understanding Asian Cultures Club, and Science Olympiad Club are scheduling interest meetings for prospective members, and the Interact Club is holding their first event of the year, a car wash, this Saturday at Columbia Middle School. All proceeds from the car wash will go to the Heart to Heart foundation, which helps to provide disaster relief across the world.

Overall, students at GL are happy to be back in school and excited to participate in school activities.

Facilities Report

Julie Kot, School Business Administrator, presented the following report:

Mountain Park Water Remediation

The Mountain Park remediation is 95% complete. The contents of the basement have been removed and discarded or cleaned. The walls, floors, and ceilings have been power washed and cleaned with a hydrogen peroxide solution and the sump pump pits have also been cleaned. The restoration company has indicated they are letting fans and blowers run for the next two days to dry the areas cleaned, which will complete the project.

There are two resolutions on the agenda tonight with respect to the remediation. The first, rescinding the resolution from our September 9th meeting, as that vendor called the day before they were to begin work and advised they could no longer do the inventory portion they had original included in their proposal. The second resolution, is the agreement with PuroClean who has performed similar remediation work in the district in the past and was able to do both the cleaning, removal, and inventory at a slightly lower cost than IRS.

Transportation

Regarding the Bus Driver shortage, a notification came out today from my state organization advising that the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission has committed to expediting school bus driver appointments. NJASBO is compiling a list from Business Administrators of requested appointments and submitting them to DMV daily, and our district made a submission today. Hopefully more drivers will be available soon to begin to ease the severe shortage. Due to on-going legal matters, I cannot publicly address questions I received about the current transportation vendor's contract. However, I am recommending the related resolution be approved tonight.

National School Lunch Program – Free Meals

We've had some inquiries about why the district is not offering free lunch as some other districts, such as Summit, are doing this year. Berkeley Heights, similar to New Providence, does not participate in the National School Lunch Program, and are therefore not eligible to take advantage of the free program announced by U.S. Department of Agriculture.

There are two primary reasons the district does not participate in the National School Lunch Program. First, the district does not have the requisite number of Title I (low income) students that would make participation in the program feasible. Additionally, participating schools must follow a low fat, low sodium, low sugar plan with significantly limited options. When the district participated in NSLP in the past, the food selections and quality were not well-received. The district is currently able to offer a variety of food choices, including premium options, and larger portions than would be possible in the NSLP.

I understand there was an opportunity for the District to participate in the special free program being offered this year. Unfortunately, the deadline to do so was May 1st and a managerial decision was made prior to my arrival not to participate. I made inquiries, but the district was not able to join after that deadline.

Facilities Report (continued)

If you or someone you know is struggling to provide lunch for your school-aged child, I encourage you to complete the Free and Reduced Lunch Application which can be found on the district website. That is the best way to get immediate assistance for food insecurity caused by financial difficulties, as well as reaching out to churches and local food banks.

ADMINISTRATION: The Board of Education formally voted to approve Administration Items A-B, which include the following policies, and will be further detailed in the meeting minutes:

- Introduction of the following policies for study and first reading: *(M) Mandated by law*

Policy	Title	Action
P 1140	Affirmative Action Program (M)	New
P 1523	Comprehensive Equity Plan (M)	New
P 1643	Family Leave (M)	New
P 3144.12	Certification of Tenure Charges – Inefficiency (M)	New
P 4159	Support Staff Member/School District Reporting Responsibilities	New
P 5306	Health Services to Nonpublic Schools (M)	New
P 5307	Nursing Services Plan (M)	New
P 2412	Home Instruction due to Health Condition (M) (Revision)	Revision

- Second reading and adoption of the following policy:

Policy	Title	Action
P 1648.11	The Road Forward COVID-19 – Health and Safety (M) with Appendices C & G	New
P 1648.13	School Employee Vaccination Requirements (M)	New
P 2270	Religion in Schools	Revised
P 2422	Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (M)	Revised
P 2467	Surrogate Parents and Resource Family Parents (M)	New
P 5111	Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students (M)	Revised
P 5116	Education of Homeless Children	New
P 5120	Assignment of Students	Revised
P 6115.01	Federal Awards/Funds Internal Controls – Allowability of Costs (M)	New
P 6115.02	Federal Awards/Funds Internal Controls – Mandatory Disclosures (M)	New
P 6115.03	Federal Awards/Funds Internal Controls – Conflict of Interest (M)	New

Second reading and adoption continued.		
P 6311	Contracts for Goods or Services Funded by Federal Interest (M)	New
P 7432	Eye Protection (M)	Revised
P 8110	School Attendance Areas	Revised
P 8130	School Organization (M)	Revised
P 8420	Emergency and Crisis Situations (M)	Revised
P 8540	School Nutrition Programs (M)	Revised
P 8550	Meal Charges/Outstanding Food Service Bill (M)	Revised

EDUCATION: The Board of Education formally voted to approve Education Items A-C which will be further detailed in the meeting minutes.

PERSONNEL: The Board of Education formally voted to approve Personnel Items A-M which will be further detailed in the meeting minutes.

BUSINESS: The Board of Education formally voted to approve Business Items A-H which will be further detailed in the meeting minutes.

FINANCE: The Board of Education formally voted to approve Finance Items A-B which will be further detailed in the meeting minutes.