

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – October 20, 2020

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, October 20, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM, pursuant to notice sent to each member.

Mrs. Minneci called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

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

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Mr. Gregory Tatum, Mr. Gerry Benaquista, Mrs. Fernanda Manochio, Mrs. Diane Cappiello, Mrs. Anne Hart, Mr. Craig Wojcik, Mrs. Kim Conti, Mrs. Maureen Guilfoyle, Mrs. Nicole Ahern

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Lester Taylor, Esq.

Mrs. Williams led the Board and audience members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Cappiello read the statement required under the “Open Public Meetings Act”, a copy of which is on file in the office of the Board Secretary.

Mrs. Minneci read the District’s mission statement.

COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC ON RESOLUTIONS:

Paul Casey stated I’m super excited to see the articulation agreements with universities, including Kean, are on the agenda tonight. Also wanted to send a thank you to all the district staff for all the work they are putting in over these last few months. This is not an easy time for students and teachers. We really appreciate that.

I wanted to talk about the agenda item Dr. Morgan put on the worksession agenda last week in regards to students being given an opportunity for AP and Honors classes. When my son was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade he wished to be in Honors Social Studies and came home one day from school and basically said it is not a good learning environment - the environment for him in a non-honors class. We petitioned for him to be in the class and he still wasn’t allowed to be. The following year he did get into Honors and he is doing fine for the last three years. I think that shows that children that are given that opportunity really can exceed and do well.

In an article that was in the Education Week a couple of years ago, a teacher that teaches AP wrote the following (a copy is appended to the minutes):

“When it comes to Advanced Coursework, Equity is Access – Although I am an AP teacher, I never took an AP, IB, or honors class while I was in high school. This was for a host of reasons, but in general, there weren’t very many kids who looked like me in those classes – and the news tells us that not much has changed in the last twenty years. Around the national students of color and low-income students are underrepresented in accelerated courses; this is a long-term driver and consequences of societal inequality.

A quick note: I’m using the language of high school – Dual Enrollment, AP, IB and Honors – because that’s my context, but the same basic principles of equity and access to gifted and accelerated programs apply at the younger grades.

In my role as 2016 State Teacher of the Year and in my advocacy since, I’ve had the pleasure of visiting many schools. These visits are almost always rewarding, but there’s a repeated sin: You enter the school and are greeted by hallways full of diverse, energetic, chatty students. The principal or counselor proudly walks you around, talking about their recent test score history, extracurricular, or rising graduation rate. You round a corner and all of the sudden things shift. As you look in the doors of classrooms, something is different. Suddenly a school with the demographics of Oakland has math classes that look like Oslo. You’ve entered the Honors hallway or the Dual Enrollment Small School, or the IB wing, and it looks nothing at all like the school as a whole. I’ve seen it time, after time, after depressing time.

High school course selection is a major determinant of post-high school and life options. Students enrolled in advanced coursework go to college and succeed academically there at higher rates, especially in STEM majors. But too often the selection for these classes is at the whim of the gatekeepers, teachers, counselors and principals, who don’t approach the work from an equity perspective. When we deny access, we close potential doors of opportunity for students.

It doesn’t have to be this way. In my district and school we strive to make sure our accelerated classes look like our hallways – it’s an official district policy called Academic Acceleration. We never turn kids away. Even the jocks (a few against their will) are enrolled – there are no applications, no gatekeeping. In fact, it’s the opposite. We fight with them (and their parents) when they try to drop the classes in September. We want every seat filled and we want the accelerated classes to look like our building as a whole.

All students deserve access. To the teachers, counselors, and principals who serve as the gatekeepers to accelerated programs, I offer you a challenge:

Stop the gatekeeping. If your honors, AP and IB classes don't look like the rest of your school, you're perpetuating systemic racism and classism. If you're the gatekeeper, stop it. Remove the gates. Here are some concrete ways:

- Increase the number of seats in advanced classes by converting general education classes to accelerated classes. When I began teaching AP Government, we had two sections in our building; we now have seven. More sections means more access for students.
- Seek out 'non-traditional AP students' (male students-of-color, in particular) and push them to take more rigorous classes. I target the loudmouth know-it-alls. I have a soft spot for them because I was one and they're often desperate for a challenge.
- Move from "opt-in" to "opt-out" AP enrollment. We have mountains of evidence from 401k enrollment in the private sector that folks who are automatically enrolled in the savings programs are more likely to remain in them. It's the same for accelerated classes. The more of a hassle you make getting out, the more likely students stay in the course.

These steps require little additional funding but do require a shift in how we view the purpose of accelerated classes. When it comes to AP exams, we don't talk about pass rates at my school. We talk about the total number of passers because our focus is on access and, in the end, more students taking the classes will lead to more students passing exams.

Now, don't mishear me – there are no magic bullets. This is easier blogged than done. On the teacher end, I have to teach the class differently. I spend a ton of time building context for students, and I heavily scaffold vocabulary. Frankly, many students in my classes won't pass the end-of-year exam, but they still deserve access to rigorous, engaging coursework. I remind them that the exam is a mere snapshot of one moment in their academic journeys and, considering I never took or passed an AP exam in high school, they're already head of me."

There is data that shows that access is an equitable solution for all children. My son is not example, which we advocated for, but all children should have access. I encourage the Board to pass that policy. Thank you.

Sienna Bucu stated I also want to talk about Policy 2 – from a student's perspective. AP classes saved me \$36,560 worth of education. That is how much one semester at Brandeis College is. That is what they value that education at and our AP classes saved me that and specifically the AP classes I took senior year because Brandeis only takes 5's and I got 5's my senior year. My junior year was the hardest year of high school for me. My last period grades were a hot mess. If those had been my first marking period grades I would not have been allowed into the AP classes. I had to petition for one my senior year. Everyone who wants to take a AP class would be able to take one. Not just because of how much money you save from

taking AP classes, how much you learn from them but it is a totally different environment than taking a regular class. That speaks to our regular classes as well. This policy is just a first step. Everyone should have a quality education in Union and it's not the teacher's fault of the way our classes are structured but you are just not going to succeed in college or it is going to be really quick learning process if you are not exposed to rigor. I think we as a student body – AP classes were families because it was the same kids all the time. It was a very small tightknit group. I was not the best at science and math so my friends in that class brought me up to that level because I was in the room. Everybody deserves a seat in the room. I am an art major and I took AP calculus, AP bio, AP physics – I didn't need any of those things to go and be an art major at Brandeis but being in the room with the types of kids that are in AP classes helped me become a better, more well-rounded student. Even if you get C's, D's or fail – the information that you take out of those classes far exceeds the measurement of a grade on the test. When we are talking about schools, we are talking about education, we are not talking about educational matrix and that is something that we have to remember when we are trying to educate a student – learning and grades are not the same thing. There are reasons for some people to have terrible grades. My junior year I tore my ACL and I didn't want to do anything because I couldn't walk and that would have barred me from AP classes had I done it earlier or had a teacher that had not been aware of all the things that were going on and helped me petition to get into classes. Everyone should have access. I'm taking a sociology education class in college right now and I'm going to read you something from a reading that we had. The name of the chapter is "If Schools are Doing Their Job We Wouldn't Need to Exist" – it talks specifically about higher education students or students achieving at a higher level and it says "Tracking AP courses and other higher (inaudible) processes also contribute to students' disenfranchisement by siphoning resources away from most students nor does tracking necessarily assist those students tracked in high levels who do not always show higher achievement than they would without tracking." This idea of AP and regular classes is a bigger picture idea. You can't stop talking about equity and education by passing this policy but I urge you to do so. This is just a first step if we have to raise the level of all of the students all of the time. This is a tangible way that is in your control that you can do so. A couple of my friends are here to speak also who have different educational experiences and hopefully you will listen to them as students because these are the kinds of kids that are in college right now and can tell you the difference in our classes and what kind of real lived experience it is. This is just a first step. Please, coming from a girl that is in college right now, without my AP classes, I would have been lost and I had to fight for them but I never had to fight for them alone and I'm grateful for my teachers for that but all the kids should have access to the opportunities I had because for me they were unlimited but for other people, including some of the people that are going to talk, that is not the case. Please vote yes even if you are a little unsure, hopefully you will listen. Thank you.

Abby Hagan stated I'm also going to be talking about Policy 2 from a different perspective. I am a second year student at Boston University and studying marine science, I'm a STEM major. In high school I did take a variety of AP classes and I think the most important take away from AP classes that I had access to simply because I was tossed into a couple of Honors courses in middle school and I got a little bit ahead on my academic track. AP classes really prepare you for college. I took my AP exams, I got 3's, my school did not take them, that is fine but what I gained from those classes was the experience of the rigor of college work. Specifically, AP bio because I had to take intro bio last year and it was difficult but not as



difficult as it would have been if I hadn't taken an AP bio. All the labs I did in my AP biology class I redid in my first semester in college. I not only had background information on what I was doing but I was able to push ahead and I knew what I was going through and I knew how to do all the procedures. In short my AP classes gave me a leg up on all my other classmates and I was able to succeed with flying colors in my classes. Going back to some simple psychology about people and you tell them what they can and can't do – when you tell a student that you can't take an AP class that has a really big impact on their mental health. It has a really big impact on what they can and can't do. It is a simple thing; you can tell yourself I can do this and keep telling yourself over and over again, I can do it, I can do it, you will eventually be able to do it but if you keep telling your students you can't be in the class, you can't be in an Honors class they are going to think they are not good enough to do it. That is the type of inequity that we need to abolish in this district. I was talking about this to my roommate today that our whole lives are equated to numbers from the first step that we enter school. We are equated to grades, letters, numbers and our self-worth is equated to that. I think having our opportunities be equated to numbers that we had in the past, that doesn't give everyone a fair chance it is not equitable at all. You can have a slip up in a semester or quarter and that prevents you from getting into an AP class which would otherwise open up doors for you and save you money in college; give you background experience. One quarter should not define essentially your whole life. I think that is all I have to say and I hope you vote yes on Policy 2. It will give a lot of students great opportunities and it is a step in the right direction for the district. Thank you.

Sabrina Prevost stated I am opposite from everyone. I went to Burnet Middle School. I was only able to take Honors English at the time. I wasn't qualified to take Honors geometry because my math scores were not good enough which stunned both myself and my mom. I tested to go to Newark Academy and I accepted to Newark Academy even though Union believe that my scores were not good enough to be in Honors math. I couldn't go to Newark Academy due to tuition reason and things of that nature so I ended up going to Union High School. I entered Union High School as a Honors English and again still wasn't good enough to be part of the Honors math program. I was held back when it came to math but I was always one grade ahead in my math classes. I remember my first year in Honors English I was accused of cheating and plagiarism and my mom had to go to the Board and fight on my behalf. Just to show my struggle into AP was always hard, I'm not sure why but I always fought for my position there. Continuing my high school year I ended up finally being able to enter AP English and AP History. One of the only people of color was in my program. Excelled and did very well. Again still wasn't eligible to be in Honors or AP math at the time. Shout to Ms. Shannon, her class was the first class that generally prepared me for math that I took in college. Due to the fact that I couldn't take Honors or AP math, I ended up paying out of pocket every Saturday to take math at UCC so I could make sure I was ahead of the game when I entered college. My junior year entering my senior of high school, I was denied to get into AP English for senior year although I have been in AP English and Honors English since 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I had to petition for that. My mom had to come in and speak to the Board in order for me to be have a seat in AP English so overall my background when it comes to high school, AP and Honors classes, I always fought for my position although my grades have always excelled and proved the fact that I should be in those courses. Just to come into college, applying for college I was accepted to Spellman and that is the number one HBCU; however, because I didn't have enough AP or Honors credit, I wasn't even accepted to Rutgers, New Brunswick. I currently go to Rutgers Newark and when I spoke

to an advisor at Rutgers, New Brunswick they told me that due to the fact that I didn't take enough AP or Honors classes I wouldn't be admitted into the business school therefore Rutgers, Newark would probably be the best thing for me. I have a 3.9 GPA, I'm an accounting major and a legal studies minor. Overall I wasn't afforded the ability to be in all the AP or Honors classes that my counterparts were allowed to be in; however, I always fought for my position to be there. I currently work as a TA and I work closely with 230 freshman students who didn't have the opportunity to be in AP or Honors classes and I watch them struggle every single day. I spend about 20 hours every single week speaking to my students just to prepare them for a simple exam if they were able to take an AP or Honors course in their high school they would be better prepared for their freshman year in college. Thank you.

Mr. Taylor stated Mrs. Minneci, it sounds like a lot of the members of the public are speaking about the proposed policy that was read on first reading last week. I did send a memo to the policy committee, Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Williams this afternoon per the Board's request last week to review that policy. As a point of order may I inform the other Board members a brief observation of that policy per the request last week – in the public's consideration. Mrs. Minneci stated sure, thank you.

Mr. Taylor stated there is no intent to dissuade the Board from adopting this policy. It is within your purview, your responsibility and powers to set policy in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. I just want to point out and reiterate the presumptions that I made last week and I confirmed those presumptions based upon my further legal review and analysis of not just the proposed policy but also your existing policy – namely 5145.4. Your existing Policy 5145.4 essentially says albeit in three more pages but accomplishes and/or says the same thing that this draft policy says with the exception of choosing curriculum or program but the first sentence of your existing Policy 5145.4 says “the Township of Union School District shall provide equal and bias free access for all students to all school facilities, courses, programs, activities and services and give them maximum opportunity to achieve their potential regardless of race, creed, color, natural origin, ancestry, age, sex, affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, liability for service, etc.” Essentially that accomplishes what is referenced in the draft policy.

Also I will just note that the draft policy essentially mirrors verbatim the policy that was adopted by the South Orange/Maplewood School District in 2015. It is important to note that policy was drafted or doctored by the South Orange/Maplewood School District in 2015 after that district entered into a consent agreement in 2014 with the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Civil Rights in connection with prior litigation in claims of racial discrimination, disparage etc. with respect to presumptively to access a program in that school district. The draft policy that was presented to you this evening was verbatim a policy from another school district that appears to have been narrowly tailored to address a pending litigation matter which does not apply to or affect the Union Township Public Schools, at least to my knowledge. I'm not aware of any lawsuits being filed or claims being made in that regard about this policy or the lack thereof and/or any similar challenges to Policy 5145.4 which again substantially addresses the same thing. To the extent that there wants to be more choice, a recommended course of action can be simply to amend your existing policy rather than creating a new policy which is duplicitous and/or maybe counter intuitive based upon a legal assessment.

What I also want to point out to the Board is that there are some significant legal, educational and funding concerns raised by this policy. Not that the policy can't be adopted but the recommendation is that it be further reviewed with the policy committee and that it further be reviewed by the administration – the superintendent, the business administrator and any assistant superintendent or other professionals involved in the curriculum but also your special services area because there are areas of this policy which are broad and a lot of policies are broad and I'm not saying that to be critical but for instance when it says all elementary and middle school students shall have access and I have heard a lot of conversations about AP courses – I'm just a lawyer, but I don't even know if AP courses even exist in elementary and/or middle schools. If they do great, but if they don't, the policy should be revised to reflect that.

I heard one of the speakers talk about the right to just sign up for AP course. I don't know but I believe there is a pre-requisite or requirements, conditions precedent to being admitted into an AP course. For the Board to just pass a policy saying you can sign up for it, it could be contrary to law or State and County regulations. Not saying that students should not be encouraged to apply for and be given the support but those are some of the concerns that if you pass a policy that says a parent can sign their student up, but the law doesn't allow that – we have a problem because then the parents can say you are not following your policy. Your policies can't supersede the law.

There are some additional budgetary issues in terms of providing tutoring and afterschool sessions. If you adopt this policy tonight as it is written, you need to have tutoring and afterschool sessions in place tomorrow. If you don't, you will have parents lined up next month saying you have not provided the funding for and/or the supports for the policy that you adopted. Since we all know that the budget for the 2020-2021 school year has already been implemented and I believe it was cut even further from the State after it was implemented, at a minimum, this policy should be tabled for the next academic school year so that the appropriate budget but also academic supports, programs and curriculum can be reviewed with your administration.

One of the primary Code of Ethics for School Board members is that decisions not be made until consulting with those effected by them. Now there are some decisions that don't involve consultation because they don't effect the day-to-day operations of the district. Those that do effect the day-to-day operations of the district and the budget, should just from a due diligence standpoint, at least be reviewed with the administration and the Board members.

Not saying that this policy can't be adopted ever but if you do adopt it tonight, you may be exposing this Board to potential claims and/or litigation. I will stop right there because we are in a public forum.

There are some additional questions that are in the memo that was sent to the policy committee. I say this respectfully, when it references "all students will be given age appropriate curriculum options and/or instruction" – you Board members know when it comes to special education, students are not necessarily taught or educated in accordance with the curriculum that is adopted by the district. Rather they are educated with the Individual Education Plan that has the necessary modifications etc. If you have a policy that says "all students" without carving out

exceptions for special education to the extent that the law requires and/or allows, again you have some overbroad language that could have a negative impact.

Not saying you can't but per your request Board members, I reviewed it, my recommendation is at a minimum, the policy be referred back to the committee and referred to the administration to answer these questions because many fall with the administration purview – from an educators' standpoint versus legal. Thank you.

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you for that update for those members that were not in the policy committee meeting.

Yocasta Bren stated I'm in shock right now. I have never heard a more obstructionist statement. I will say this and this is in regard to the policy. The New York Times stated that African Americans represent just over 14.6% of the total high school graduating class last year but made up less than 4% of the AP student population who earned a score of three or better on at least one exam. Ladies and gentleman, what I'm asking you to do and what I think the rest of many people in this community are asking you to do is to make our classrooms in our AP courses represent the student population. This is a well-researched issue and that colleges and universities are looking for students who have taken AP classes. Imagine a district in which most of your students have indeed taken AP classes and done well in those courses that are accepted into some of the best institutions of higher education in the country. Imagine this district being able to say that we are that good. To say no to a policy that gives access to all of your students is simply again a representation of your own implicit bias, of your own inability to see how important it is for all students to have equal access and to be illicit and to continue to maintain a culture of illiteracy where you are not allowed equal access to all of your students. That would be an embarrassment for this community and an embarrassment for our district of education. I am again simply saying – say that our students are not in fact able to engage in the rigors of an AP course and to not expect more of them and to not provide the support is simply saying we don't want our students to succeed we want to have a below average district and that is what you will continue to have if you continue to obstruct these kinds of progressive policies. Thank you.

Juan Acevada stated can anyway tell me how I can access the agenda with the policies. I was looking at the website and I cannot find it. Mrs. Cappiello stated go to the website, click on Board of Education, click Board Meeting Info, click on meeting agenda, click on upcoming events and you will see "regular meeting, Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>" – click on that and scroll all the way down to the bottom and POL-2 will be listed on the exhibits. Mr. Acevada stated thank you very much. Mrs. Cappiello stated your welcome.

Maria Fonseca stated I also want to talk about the same policy – my personal experience with Honors and AP classes. I have been in the Union schools since 1<sup>st</sup> grade and I am very well aware of how it feels and experiences to actually go to school here. I'm assuming a lot of the adults don't. I have had a very recent experience. I graduated about two years ago with Sienna and Sabrina. I was in several AP classes. I was AP English, history, chemistry – whatever and personally Mr. Taylor mentioned on paper the policy is that there is an equal, unbiased opportunity for everyone to apply and all that which is really great and wonderful but what's on



paper is not what happens in person. That is not what we experienced in schools and you can see that by how many kids there are in AP classes. Some of my AP classes had 10 students and it wasn't because people weren't smart enough, it wasn't because they didn't have the grades, there are all these different requirements and maybe someone didn't have one. One of the requirements was to get a recommendation from several teachers; but what happens to the kids that don't have a bond with their teachers or aren't the teachers' pet then they wouldn't get that one requirement. To say that it is unbiased and an equal opportunity for everyone is just not fair and it is not an accurate representation of what is experienced in the schools. I also want to mention how good it is to be in an AP class. Like Sienna said we all had bonded and we all worked together to push each other to do better and now that I'm in college, all of the classes that I took AP courses in, I either got credit in college so I didn't have to take the class, so I saved a whole bunch of money, or I already learned all of that in my AP classes. In AP chemistry, I passed three classes on the knowledge that I learned there and that is amazing. You start to think about all the people who didn't get to take those classes and I remember being in high school and talking to my friends that weren't in AP classes and they said I'm not smart, I don't apply because I didn't get in the first time. I even compared my AP classes to my non-AP or Honors classes, the experience is completely different. The education is different. It is no way the fault of the teachers. All the teachers were amazing and great and always did their jobs perfectly but the environment is just different when you have people who were told you in AP, you are the best of the best, you got a special little seat in that classroom to now you are in a classroom with 30 other people no you weren't good enough to get in, it is different environment. I just wanted to say we need to acknowledge that policy that is on paper is not what is currently being experienced. We need to make these steps and vote yes for this policy so hopefully kids in the future can have the opportunity to be in those classes.

Nellis Regis Darby stated I just wanted to say thank you to Dr. Morgan for bringing this policy to Board and the community. It is my belief that this is an opportunity for the district to think bigger. It is an opportunity for the district to lead with data. It is an opportunity to make the district uncomfortable. It is an opportunity for everyone to speak his or her truth and it is an opportunity to be engaged. I also took a look at this Policy 5145.4 and I looked at the language and as the attorney read the language to the public, but it is obvious to me and to the community that this policy is not being followed by the district by simply just looking at the data. My daughter for example, who has been in AP and Honors classes since she was a freshman in high school. She has been with the same 16 students since 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Let's just take a look at the data. Yesterday I attended a webinar for the 2022 kids that are applying for colleges and one of the biggest things that they said on the webinar is "how many AP classes is your daughter taken?" and I think we are missing a big opportunity especially when it comes to equity to make sure we are giving every student who attends our schools a fair and equal opportunity to be that best person that they possibly can become. I think everyone on the Board, we need to put our personal feelings aside and I think it was Dr. Morgan who said this – "what about the kids?" – we have to put them first at all times and I think we need to leave our personal feelings and all of that at the door, especially when we are making decisions about students and children in our community. I believe everyone who is on this Board their best intent they always want to do what is best for the kids in our community so let's do so. Let's be that person who makes sure that we give every student an opportunity to rise within our community and district. Give them equal opportunity to succeed so thank you to everyone and I hope that every person on this



Board will do the right thing. I know the lawyer has to read his comments to protect the district but at the end of the day, I think we have to do what is best for kids. Thank you.

Susan Lipstein stated I think after listening to Mr. Taylor, I feel a little bit like a student who wanted to get into AP classes or Honors classes and was given a whole runaround about why they can't instead of how they can. I want to state that I see this policy was originally passed in 1984 and revised in 1995. We are not following this policy and we weren't even following this policy years ago because my son had a similar experience in 1995 when I had to petition up to the highest ranks to have him put into the Honors classes in Burnet Middle School. Yes Mr. Taylor we do have Honors classes in elementary and we do have those kinds of things. He was not accepted, I did not find out until afterwards and one reason why he wasn't placed because he met the criteria, except for two points on a test, which I was able to show that there was enough of a reasonable doubt on those tests – is because Burnet only had one Honors class for each subject and the same as Kawameeh and Burnet had 33.3% more students. There was inequity then and I don't know if that has changed since then. I just want you know that this kid in 1995 could not get into Honors English and history at Burnet Middle School and went on to get an academic scholarship at Rutgers – Phi Beta Kappa – he has a law degree, University of Michigan, he has an MBA from Georgetown but he would not have been eligible for Honors classes at Burnet Middle School. Obviously we were not following that policy then, we are not following that policy now and that is to the detriment of our children. I also want to bring up the memory of Irwin Jaguar who was a science supervisor. I don't know if Mrs. Minneci's or Mrs. Richardson's children had a chance for him to be their children. He did teach my son in AP bio and he also became a friend of mine and was on the Education Foundation and one of the founders. He always aired on the side of helping a student get into an AP science class because he always wanted them to reach higher than their grasp – that was his motto. Although he is no longer with us now, he was science supervisor and he would allow these students to get in, didn't care what they looked like, he let them come in and he made sure they succeeded because of the kind of teacher and person he was. He was so proud when he was able to have these students achieve. If you don't set the bar high, they are not going to reach it. My son still remembers, he took the AP bio and he only got a four but he still remembers Mr. Jaguar said you could have made a five. He is 38 years old and there is a part of him that knows that he could have done better and that has stuck with him for all those years. You have no idea how important it is to not put down your kids and not find reasons not to do the right thing.

Jeffrey Monge stated with all due respect to the Board Attorney, Mr. Taylor, this is a public comment period and I think your statement which you made on your own behalf without having your hand raised, I think this opportunity is for the public to comment. Please consider that in the future. My comment, a lot of folks talked about the policy, I'm totally for that. One of the young ladies that spoke and talked about how she was one of the few people of color in her AP class at Union High School and for those of you that don't know, the majority of the student population in Union High School are students of color. There are some logical assumptions that folks could put together there.

I want to speak about O-4 and O-3 – this is for the ESIP program. This is probably one of the most impactful things we have had in the agenda for quite a while and where it is a \$24.5 million project for bond financing for the district and it is probably the least spoken about thing

that I have ever seen with so much impact. I think it is probably something that the Board as a whole has not been educated on as much as they probably could have and let alone the public. I received a presentation from the Schneider folks that seems like no one else has and it is 100 pages and I would love to post it. I don't have the capabilities to do that but there is a big issue that I brought up last week and I will bring it up again. First this resolution is talking about trying to phase this out and there is a big responsibility here that is put on people that are potentially not going to be here and won't be here come January and that is the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent – we don't have a BA and potentially the whole finance and operations committee, amongst others. This is something that is a huge leap. I don't know if folks are educated enough to be able to make this decision. The other thing to consider is this is based upon operations of a fully operating district which we are not. We are in a pandemic. It is not very clear of the negative effects of that being the case. There was a statement made in the report that I did receive and it talked about having an issue about penalties related to the pandemic because we are not in the schools at full operation. The agreement that you have in O-4 talks about the Business Administrator and Board Secretary and you don't even have one and then there is also in #5 it talks about the president and vice president and the Business Administrator and Board Secretary being given the authority to be able to sign on behalf of the district on these documents. That is a huge concern.

Peter Leone stated I would like to thank Mr. Taylor for going over the policy that the Board has had in place regardless of what year it was passed. We should follow policies. I have been a teacher in this district for a while. I have probably taught many of your kids. As a teacher, I don't know if it is sound education policy to take the teacher's recommendation out of the Honors/AP class procedure. I have been teaching Honors classes for well over 10 years and I have had many students of every race, creed, religion and either they succeed or they don't in my class and based on that I recommend if I think they will succeed when they move on to Union High School or whatever institution they go to. To take us out of that equation, doesn't make educational sense. As teachers we know the students and know what they are capable of and not capable of. There have been a lot of good reasons presented why we should allow everyone who wants to come in to an Honors/AP class and I'm not discrediting any of them. But the one thing that I think about, we talk about the student's mental health and how disparaging it is to the kid who says you know what AP is just not right for you or Honors isn't right for you – what about that very same kid who is not going to be able to succeed at that level and then they get a "D" or "F" – are we thinking about their mental health and how that is going to feel especially in high school when a grade counts. At Kawameeh Middle School where I teach, if the student gets a "D" in my class, o.k., but that is under a high school transcript – all of these institutions that we are hoping our students are going to get into, how are they going to get into these great institutions with a "D". Not only that, if the colleges first question is, and I have a daughter who applied for college and I have one coming up, if the administration officer said to me as a parent, how many AP classes has your kid taken? Then something is wrong with the college, not our educational system. If the only way you can succeed in a college is if you have this amount of AP classes, then something is wrong and something has to be questioned about what the colleges are doing. As a teacher, I'm all about the right fit for the right student. I have had those hard conversations with students who have been some of my favorite – you want to talk about teacher's pet, those who know me, I don't have pet students – I like all of my students equally and I treat them all equally. I have had those conversations where I have had to tell students, you

are not quite there yet, give it a year, apply for Honors next year and then follow that advice and because I live in Town and active in this Town, when I see those students 4-5 years down the road, they tell me that they may not have been in honors in 9<sup>th</sup> grade but they got there in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade and those students are doing just fine.

Steven Lee stated I come to speak on POL-2 as an alumnus of our schools, as someone who took eleven AP courses and as a former ESL and AAP student and after reading the proposed policy several times, the only thing clear to me is how unclear this policy is. First, this policy proposal mentions K-12 curricular alignment. Alignment to what; there are already existing policies on curriculum adoption (6140); curriculum design and development (6141); curriculum guide (6143) – policies bound by State laws and regulations that are binding. Does the proposed policy conflict with such existing policies? Because this was a long topic tonight, the proposed policy states “the ability to choose between current and future educational programs”. Does that mean this policy will eliminate pre-requisites and requirements for AP courses? If yes, such a measure would not be good policy and it would actually end up hurting students and the overall reputation of the AP program and this is backed up by twenty-five years of research and data. Utah Valley University, Professional Russell Warn in a 2015 study, “there is so far no evidence that enrolling all students into AP classes increased overall academic achievement and it does not seem beneficial to push students into an AP class if they are not prepared for it academically”. Yale Professor William Lipton concluded in a 2010 study, “little indication that the introduction of AP courses into inner city schools has improved the quality of learning or caliber of education for students. Too often the AP courses were introduced without the necessary attention to preparation and pre-requisites”. The discussion about equity tonight, UMass Lowell Professor Jack Schneider said in 2009 study, “in the case of the advanced placement program, a greater push for equity has ironically in sighted a reaction that may in the end in result in greater inequity. High schools will continue moving away from AP finding new ways to distinguish themselves as they do they may fatally undermine the credibility of the AP label”. More than anything, I think the policy lacks the substance, the clarity and strategic coherence to existing policies. This policy is not backed by research because the research over the past 25 years states otherwise. This is why I would recommend this Board to bring POL-2 back to the committee for more thought, more deliberation and for more refinement. Thank you.

Christina Pierre-Louis stated I’m a current student at Union High School. I am a senior and I don’t want to invalidate anyone else’s experience but for me personally, I haven’t really experience all the things other people are mentioning. Immediately when I was listening to everyone else speak, I notified a lot of my friends who are also minorities and we are all in AP classes and Honor Classes and I asked them if they felt left out or if they felt they weren’t given opportunities as these others and if they felt like anybody should be in Honors or AP classes and they all let me know that they haven’t experienced discrimination and they felt they should keep requirements for people to get into Honors and AP classes. I feel like a lot of the people that were speaking were graduates and I don’t know if the experience has changed from then to now but I feel as though there are a lot of people of color in Honors and AP classes and taking away the requirements kind of defeats the purpose for me. I work hard to be in Honors and AP classes and I feel like without that what separates Union High School from other schools who don’t have any Honors or AP classes. Why don’t we address the root of the problem and why people that apply to these AP classes aren’t getting accepted if they are qualified not taking away the

requirements completely. I also wanted to address that I definitely encourage all of my friends who I take regular Honors and AP classes, I encourage all of my friends in regular classes to apply for AP and they let me know that they applaud me for the work that I put in but they personally don't want to apply themselves that much and that is fine. I think it is more an individual effort as opposed to the teachers. Thank you.

Mrs. DiGirolamo stated I have been an AP teacher for nine years. I can tell you that there are many reasons why not all the students should join an AP class. I don't know if you are aware but all the AP classes are run by the College Board. When teachers go into training programs, the first thing that they are told was that we need to get ready the children, the students to pass the exams. It is very interesting to me that some parents who are complaining here about how all the children should join AP classes, are also the parents who complain about taking tests – State tests. Here we are – they all should take an AP class and AP test. I don't understand that logic. The AP classes get students to take a standardized test and that is it to pass a test. If you get a 4 or 5, possibly the college will give you credits and with that said, the parents get the benefits of paying less money. The parents save money. After all, I see this is more than anything else – money. That is all. I have been teaching these courses for a while now and I know exactly what is happening behind the scenes. Also it looks really good when students apply to colleges and they show that they have taken AP classes. Again, the benefits are only for the parents because the parents get to save a lot of money. It looks good for college applications. With that said, AP classes prepare you to take an exam and that is why I think not all the students should be allowed to get into an AP class. Thank you.

Brad Kaleek stated my first comments starts as it relates to the comments from the lawyer. I as a taxpayer in this community, I am risk adverse so I retain lawyers to help me make sure that I'm making decisions that doesn't cost me down the road. I hope the Board addresses the lawyers concerns before this vote, whether it is public or in open session. I also am a minority who graduated from Union in 1989 when Union was one of the top public schools in the State. When I got to college, professors challenged me because they knew I was from Union High School and they spoke about the public system I came from as a whole. They didn't talk about whether I was in AP or not. They had expectations from me because I graduated from Union High School and I personally hung with other fraternity brothers from urban areas and they weren't challenged as hard as I was. I would hope that the Union Public School system as a whole is what is putting students on a different level and not just the students that go to AP classes. My final comment – America is a capitalist system. The best and the brightest rise not because you got a head start because you challenge yourself. Competition in America is every day and it is healthy. If you have to compete and work hard to get into an AP class, it is only going to make you better. Being given anything in this world is a detriment to everything. May God bless and keep everyone.

Anne Marie Langan stated I attended Union Public Schools for ten years but when I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and looking at what high schools I was deciding to go into afterwards I think a big factor in my decision was the quality of education that I would be able to receive. Given these classes are not made available to everyone, I wasn't so certain that I would be able to have this high quality education that we have in the Honors and AP levels of classes. If we knew going into this school system, I scored well testing wise, but tests are so uncertain and you never know



what is going to happen in one year. I have seen high achieving, really strong students not do well on test because of testing anxiety but still do well and hardworking students and I think this policy is more of a detriment and had I known I would have this opportunity to take such high level classes, I would have definitely chosen the high school over the private school I ended up going to. I really appreciated the education I got there but I really would have liked to stay in Union. That is my experience.

Approval of Minutes:

Moved by Mrs. Higgins, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the following minutes be adopted:

1. June 16, 2020 – regular meeting
2. June 16, 2020 – executive session

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Taylor stated as you recall last week, questions came up from members of the public and/or Board members about the procedural and legal issues pertaining to agenda items O-3 and O-4 concerning ESIP. I will defer to Ms. Gorab in terms of what can and cannot be discussed in public session versus closed executive session, under the attorney client privilege and/or other exceptions to the Open Public Meetings Act. I will defer to Ms. Gorab who is attorney and an expert on this subject to disclose as much as she can in public and/or if she needs to address the Board in closed session.

Lisa Gorab, Esq. stated the two resolutions are really a continuation of a process that has been going on for a fairly long time. That process is the design and establishment and financing of an Energy Savings Improvement Program. We have talked about this before. These are energy conservation measures which when undertaken will produce savings to pay off the lease or bonds that are issued to finance it. We have gotten pretty far in this process and we have talked quite a bit.

What are these resolutions on tonight? As your projects were submitted to the Board of Public Utilities for approve, we had discussions with the Board of Public Utilities and as a result of those discussions, the professionals are advising to the Board to split this energy savings plan in two – Phase I and Phase II. Since the Board had not technically approved these plans yet, Phase I – which we will take about this evening, it has not been posted on the website because the law says you post this plan on your website once it has been approved by the Board.



Let's talk about the bifurcation, the separation of these two. As you know, the large project includes solar panels. There are two ways for this Board to undertake a solar project. The first is outright ownership of the solar panels – you buy them, you bid them, you construct them and they produce power on roofs and carports of the district. Therefore you are buying less power off the grid and the solar panels are producing power and that is one way of getting savings.

The other way to get a solar project done is through a Power Purchase Agreement and we have been through that with the Board. It is an agreement whereby a third-party subject to competitive contracting places solar panels on your roofs, carports, they own them and sells you the electricity at a lower price. The delta – the difference between what they sell it to you which is subject to competitive bid and what you are paying now is the savings.

These two options need to be more thoroughly vetted to determine what is in the best interest of the Board and that is the reason for the two phases. We are recommending that the solar be put in the second phase so we continue that vetting and a presentation to the BPU as to our calculations of savings.

Phase I would be the other improvements – the non-solar improvements and they include many HVAC improvements, lighting upgrades, building improvements, water fixture improvements, high efficiency transformers – these are all things that you have seen. You have seen the lists.

Phase I can stand on its own. Phase I is about \$9 million and can be financed and the savings will pay for those \$9 million of projects. I'm using round numbers so approximately.

What about Phase II – the second resolution you are considering tonight allows the Board to go out for another RFP for the PPA option so we can determine which is the best financial root for the Board – owning solar panels or going through the PPA.

The resolutions do two things tonight. One they allow another RFP for a PPA provider, two they allow the splitting of the projects into two. Phase I being a \$9 million project which we would continue to move forward on and the second being the solar and some improvements like roof improvements that will be paid by solar and that is also in Phase II.

In order to move forward with Phase I we need to go to a State agency called the Local Finance Board for their approval. They review your project and your cashflows. It is another level of State approval on top of the BPU that would approve Phase I.

Why now? Why should the Board move forward with these projects? It has been a long road but sometimes it does make sense to really dig in and make sure that this is in fact the best project for the Board and that is why it has taken so long. I'm sure many of you would have expected for this to move more quickly but it is very good to be deliberate about this.

Why should the bifurcation occur now and why should we move forward with Phase I? New Jersey solar incentives right now are very, very good. It is not anticipated that they will

stay there. Why does that matter? Because you get a subsidy from the State to undertake the solar project. If we don't move quickly on the RFP there is a great chance that when we get those subsidy they will be significantly less. What does that mean? Savings will be less.

Second, there are many HVAC and air conditioning improvements in Phase I and Phase II and if they get delayed; those are things the district has been looking at for a long time. If those things are delayed, a chiller won't be replaced, that needs to be replaced and the air exchange in the classrooms won't be improved which I believe the district would like and that was one of their goals.

Finally, if we move forward with Phase I, they believe they can do the contracts this summer. If we do not move forward, we can anticipate that the contracting and the actually improvements will be delayed.

Costs, when you have a contractor or architect/engineer estimate costs, they estimate when the project is going to be undertaken. If the projects are delayed, I would think that we would have to go back to the drawing board and recalculate all the prices.

This is the document that separates the projects into Phase I and Phase II, this is the Phase I portion of this which you will be approving. We would go to the Local Finance Board in November, seek their approval and then come back to you for yet another approval to authorize the issuance of the bonds to finance Phase I. This is a lengthy process, this is a process with many checks and balances and I appreciate all of your patience and the many meetings and memos and much work and thought that has gone into this. Those are the two resolutions O-3 and O-4 on your agenda.

Mr. Taylor asked are there any questions from Board members or do you want to go into closed session with Mrs. Gorab?

Mr. Nufrio stated since I was not able to see the document that Mrs. Gorab exhibited, is it possible for her to send it to our email so we can look at it for purposes of review. Mrs. Gorab stated the administration has been working on that document – I believe they have it.

Dr. Frances stated Mr. Tatum, do you understand all this? Mr. Tatum stated I have been as you know involved in this process for a number of years – about 3 years. I think for me to say that I understand all the details of the project – I have been following it – but no I don't understand everything but I understand the overall concept. When we first undertook this whole process it was because our funds are limited here in our reserve accounts, this would be a way to address some of the major issues of the district that was part of the comprehensive equity plan. We it comes to the actual financing and the reimbursement, those are things I'm learning just like everybody else as we go along and that is more the business end of it than the practical end of it.

Dr. Frances stated I would like to talk in closed session. I heard what Mr. Monge said about our schools not being fully operational, how does that effect the savings? You can answer in closed session. Mrs. Gorab stated I can answer that in public. One of the goals of this project

as I understood it was it would increase air exchange/air quality in the schools that certainly lines up with COVID related goals.

You can have energy savings two different ways. You can use less energy in two ways. You can have more efficient machinery/equipment which is the goal of this project or you can keep the switches off. If the schools are up and running, the savings are going to come from more efficient equipment. If the schools are not up and running, the savings are going to come because the lights are shut off. That is one aspect of this.

As part of this process, the Board and its ESO are required to put this report together and send it to a third party. This Board of Education approved that third-party independent review and that third-party reviewer said think about the cost of these projects in COVID. Your engineers and architects have thought about the cost of these projects during COVID and there is a contingency in the plan if those project costs should go up or decrease because there is less demand for construction.

I want to correct myself and I apologize – when I held up this document, you have seen this document before it was available, it is only divided into two phase now – Phase I and Phase II. This is not a new list. This is the same full project just in Phase I and Phase II.

Dr. Frances stated the solar panels if you are putting them are schools that already have roofs that are not that old, what about that situation? We have life on these roofs and then you are putting on new equipment on top of roofs that are recently done, how do you go about dealing with that? Mrs. Gorab stated I'm your lawyer, not an engineer, but the newer solar panels are less intrusive into the roofs so people believe that they can actually extend the life of a roof because they cover it from the elements and second, some of the solar is going on where there is going to be new roofs. They will be designed in conjunction with the roofs.

Madam President and Mr. Taylor, I'm not sure if Dr. Frances wants a more engineer type of answer. I believe the ESO may still be in the meeting if that didn't suffice. Dr. Frances stated I just wanted to know about the existing roofs that we recently done work on and there are other roofs that need to be replacing. Whoever the company is going to lay down the solar panels will be taking in the cost of the new roofs. Mrs. Gorab stated you are right. The cost of the roofs which are going to be big, will be covered by the savings of solar panels.

Mrs. Minneci stated at this time I would like to remind Board members to have their cameras on during the meeting.

Mr. McDowell stated I have a question about the earlier public comments. I think that when the public are commenting on matters that we are voting on they have more than three minutes. If Mrs. Cappiello would read the Open Public Meetings Act again, I think it says it there.

Mrs. Cappiello stated they have three minutes on the first time and three minutes at the end of the meeting. Mr. McDowell stated it is not unlimited for resolution comments? Mrs. Cappiello stated no, it is unlimited on what they want to talk about at the end of the meeting – it

doesn't have to be on the resolution, it can be anything that they want to talk about. Mr. McDowell stated thank you. Mrs. Cappiello stated you're welcome.

Communications:

**LETTER FROM AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY UNIT**

Letter from American Legion Auxiliary Units #328 and 3 donating school supplies students.

**LETTER OF RESIGNATION – ALVEAR**

Letter of resignation from Diego Alvear, math teacher-Union High School, effective November 24, 2020.

**LETTER OF RETIREMENT – CHINNICI**

Letter of resignation, for the purpose of retirement, from Peter Chinnici, special education teacher-Union High School, effective January 1, 2021.

**LETTER OF RESIGNATION – GUTIERREZ**

Letter of resignation from Juan Gutierrez, custodian-Hannah Caldwell Elementary School, effective October 20, 2020.

**LETTER OF RESIGNATION – NAVARRETE**

Letter of resignation from Jamie Navarrete, paraprofessional special services-Union High School, effective September 30, 2020.

**LETTER OF RETIREMENT – PRENDERGAST**

Letter of resignation, for the purpose of retirement, from Michelle Prendergast, educational clerk-library-Hannah Caldwell Elementary School, effective January 1, 2021.

**REQUEST FOR LEAVE – HAHN**

Request for paid child rearing leave and unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) from Elisa Hahn, teacher-Livingston Elementary School, November 9, 2020-April 14, 2021.

**REQUEST FOR INTERMITTENT LEAVE – KELLY**

Request for intermittent FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) from Robin Kelly, assistant teacher-pre-k-Hannah Caldwell Elementary School, September 28, 2020-June 30, 2021.

**REQUEST FOR EXTENSION – LOPEZ**

Request for extension of paid medical leave from Ovidio Lopez, custodian-Washington Elementary School, through October 31, 2020.

**REQUEST FOR EXTENSION – MARABUTO**

Request for extension of unpaid child rearing leave under FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) from Erin Marabuto, teacher-Connecticut Farms Elementary School, return date January 4, 2021.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – O’HOLLA

Request for leave under FFCRA for 12 weeks from Laura O’Holla, teacher-Jefferson School, October 8, 2020-December 30, 2020.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – RAFFAELE

Request for medical leave from Robin Raffaele, language arts teacher-Burnet Middle School, September 3, 2020-October 6, 2020.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION – PLACCA

Request for extension of current unpaid FMLA leave followed by unpaid non-FMLA from Nicole Placca, Spanish teacher-Union High School, return date February 1, 2021.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – VASSALLO

Request for paid medical leave from Dianne Vassallo, 12-month clerical/secretarial-Union High School, September 9, 2020-November 25, 2020.

REQUEST FOR INTERMITTENT LEAVE – SIINO

Request for intermittent FMLA leave from Frances Siino, teacher-Franklin Elementary School, October 12, 2020-March 1, 2021.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION – LANG

Request for extension of intermittent FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) from Ann Lang, teacher-Battle Hill Elementary School, through October 29, 2021.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION – OSBORNE

Request for extension of paid medical leave from Amie Osborne, special education teacher-Union High School, new return date October 13, 2020.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION – ROSA

Request for extension of unpaid child rearing leave under FMLA/NJFLA from Lisa Rosa, special education teacher-Battle Hill Elementary School, new return date January 4, 2021.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION – STERLING

Letter of resignation from Tara Sterling, television production teacher-Union High School, effective December 8, 2020.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION – HARRELL

Letter of resignation from Tommy Harrell, Supervisor of Science and Career Education-districtwide, effective October 16, 2020.

Superintendent’s Report

Mr. Tatum stated for the month of September, student attendance was 97.4%, while staff attendance was 98.0%. We are following the regular attendance procedures that we set up for the COVID time period.



As required by regulation, tonight I will present the results of the assessment requirements for the class of 2020. The Union High School Class of 2020 had 533 graduates. The number of graduates who met the graduation assessment requirements via: Alternate Assessment, ACT, PSAT, SAT or ASVAB assessment: 143; Special Ed Alternate Requirements: 34; Portfolio Appeal Process: 0. Note the portfolio process for 64 UHS students was in process, ongoing and being prepared for submission when the March stay at home order was issued. Once the executive order lifted assessment requirements, the portfolio process was concluded. Five students were denied graduation, all for credit/course requirements; zero students were denied graduation for failing to meet assessment requirements.

I'm going to turn the floor over to our Supervisor of Counseling, Nicole Ahern, and she will give you a brief overview of how the counseling department is servicing the students at this time.

Nicole Ahern gave a presentation – a summary is below and same can be seen on the Zoom meeting on the district website.

Good evening and thank you for the invitation to speak briefly this evening on behalf of the Township of Union Schools Counseling Department.

It has become evident not, more than ever, that both students and families are needing assistance, support and a sense of feeling connected. When we transitioned to a virtual learning environment back in March, the counselors came together to see how this would then translate into offering support services.

I am proud to say that we have risen to this challenge with the many resources we have been able to provide, as well as adapting to this new format so that students and families can continue to be connected to their schools, even if from home. We have one centralized location for family support and resource if you should need it.

At all levels, students and parents are able to make appointments and contact the school counselors for any needs that may arise. Individual virtual sessions are conducted daily through the Meet or Zoom platforms. Students at some levels are even able to schedule themselves into their counselor's calendar based on availability.

Additional activities, programs, and resources may differ across grade levels, elementary, middle and high school based on the needs of the students and families at each level.

While the delivery of counseling services may vary, the overall goal of student support is the same. While re-entry plans are being updated, the counseling department will again re-evaluate the format for having in-person meetings and events in order to address student needs.

I wanted to briefly share some highlights with the public, as the counselors are working extremely hard to stay informed of current information, and disseminate this information to their school communities.

As I mentioned before, taking place district wide are some common practices: virtual individual student and parent meetings, google classroom and site updates, promotion of building wide events like Week of Respect activities, Unity Day (coming up tomorrow). Student check-ins occur regularly, with counselors working with teachers and families directly in order to address specific needs. COLLABORATION The counseling department serves an important role in bringing the school community together to support students' overall academic progress and mental wellness. One important note, we are aware that not every student or family that may be struggling or need assistance is going to ask for help, however our goal is to establish working relationships and be as visible and accessible as we can in order to grow those relationships.

Many of our counselor sites are highly interactive, with many real time links which families can explore that offer information as well as opportunities for mental health support such as Zen Dens, mindfulness moments. virtual office, self-care as well as resources for, college/career, studying, social justice, and SEL.

At the Elementary level counselors conducted virtual visits of each class, explaining their role and how they can assist, which will be a practice that continues monthly with different themes. School wide events have been planned district wide.

Middle School has grade level sites, with counselors assisting during the built in student support periods in addition to meeting throughout the day. Utilization of the lunch period and homeroom for drop in sessions has been well received at both the MS and HS levels. Again, the use of interactive sites for students to be able to access appointments and resources.

UHS: Students are able to self-schedule appointments, with information sessions being offered during lunch periods. We have started some integration into Health classes for various counselor led topics. Many opportunities are pushed out the HS students via counselor Google Classrooms and out Instagram page as well, and we have had the opportunity to offer live parent Information sessions in the evenings to ask questions.

The district has committed to providing any and all necessary social and emotional, as well as academic supports for our students and their families. By addressing both Maslow and Bloom, school counselors have created a variety of ways to continue to strengthen relationships with students throughout their K-12 school years. Parents and students are encouraged to contact the school counselors with any questions or concerns they may have.

We are all in this together, and we will survive and even thrive if we remember that we are at our best when we are helping one another.

Sites: Healing and Self Care

<https://sites.google.com/twpunionschools.org/mssvetvilasschoolcounselor/home>;

<https://sites.google.com/twpunionschools.org/counselorsite/parent-resources>; Mrs. Weissberg's Virtual Office - Weekly Posts - <https://sites.google.com/a/twpunionschools.org/miss-colandrea-s-counseling-corner/calming-corner>; and Mrs. Soares' Counseling Corner

<https://classroom.google.com/c/Mzg1Nzg1MDU0NjVa>.

Mr. Tatum has always been an advocate for the social emotional wellness of our students and he has invested the time and energy in his career to make sure that every single school has services of a school counselor in their building. I feel that has been a goal of the district, not only Mr. Tatum's but the district as whole, and I think we can continue doing what we are doing and doing it well. School counselors have created a variety of ways to continue to strengthen those relationships from the ground up from K-12 throughout their time here in Union. I am also a product of Union and I have to say I'm happy to continue that mission with the students because their families and the students need it now more than ever. I encourage you to your school counselor. We are all in this together at the end of the day. We will survive this. I think we will even thrive from it. We are our best when we are helping each other.

I will work on putting resources on the District website so everyone has access to them. I appreciate your time.

Mr. Tatum stated thank you so much Mrs. Ahern. Now I will talk a little bit about the district re-entry plan that we are putting together and the assessments that are going on in the district. I need to make two things clear – one was all the dates that we outlined in late August to set the stage of virtual learning were all tentative dates. Those dates were set upon the actual circumstances they were at that particular time. What you have come to recognize and have seen a lot of evidence is that since that time, other things have changed. When we initially started our committees and we talked about the hybrid approach to school re-entry, it was with a lot of question marks that had been put before us with our committees. With that, we started to take a look at what some of the concerns were and funding was also an issue. It is nice to be able to say moving forward that we actually received some funds while we were in the virtual world and we were able to address some of those things that came out as a condition for going into virtual and also respond to the teachers, students and families' medical needs as well as those teachers who were assessed as to whether or not they would be able to return to the district.

That being said, I want to respond to a concern that has come to me regarding why we are taking the approach that we are taking and why are we now in a middle of doing an assessment by an outside firm. Part of it is tied to what I said a moment ago and that was the initial plan that we had was indeed hybrid. What we were getting concerned about – interior, ventilation, that kind of thing so that this assessment that is going on right now is the third of three assessments. One assessment was done by our building administration, another one was done by our district supervisor and after I got the feedback from their concerns, I said for us to be careful and safe, let's do a third assessment and that is why our architects are taking a look at this particular circumstances. The whole goal is upon completion of all the information that we are gathering, we want to be able to make an informed decision about a return to school. It is most unlikely our November 1<sup>st</sup> will be met only because this assessment is still ongoing. I do think that as we outline and get all the information I'm going to give you tonight, if that certification is good, I think December 1<sup>st</sup> is probably more realistic.

I want to take a moment to go to Mr. Benaquista, who is in charge of safety, and has worked hand-in-hand with the maintenance department, to give us additional information on the school environments as they stand today.

Mr. Benaquista stated as Mr. Tatum mentioned, as well as Mrs. Ahern, talking about meeting the needs of the kids social emotionally and with the intervention, we are looking at everything as a whole. As we reenter and as we finish out, hopefully our virtual and some students may continue to stay virtual, we also are going to adjust our current plan to meet the needs of the students. We are continually getting feedback from students, teachers, parents and trying to keep our hand on the pulse of what is going on with virtual. Many people have said this time around, virtual learning is completely different from the spring. We really elevated the professional development for our teachers and they really have run with it. Our students have stepped up and are learning a whole different way now and very attuned to staying on the computer the majority of the day.

We are finding that we do need to make some adjustments to scheduling to meet the kids needs to provide more social/emotional time during the day. Mrs. Ahern's counselors are already doing it throughout all Union schools but designating more daily time for her counselors to provide more social/emotional for the students as well as the students that need a little more intervention – didn't understand a lesson and provide them avenues to meet the teacher in either a small setting or even in a one-on-one setting by scheduling a meeting through Google Classroom. So that is one aspect that we are doing as we adjust back to a hybrid learning. Part of getting to a hybrid learning, as Mr. Tatum said, we need to make sure our environment is safe for our students and staff and that is why the third-party assessment is important to make sure that we aren't missing anything and anything we need to fix we can jump on as soon as we receive the report.

Certain PPE equipment – we have placed our orders for what we feel is needed to protect some students as well as staff and we are working with a company to make sure, with the younger levels, where it is harder to understand the distance we need to stay apart – we are getting Plexiglas which many schools have gravitated towards when they go back to the hybrid learning. The kids will have those dividers in case they sneeze or their mask comes off – they will have a little more protection there.

We feel if our buildings are deemed safe from this third-party and we provide the right classroom environment with the protective equipment as well as Plexiglas, wearing masks – that our students and staff will stay safe. Those are some of the things that we are doing to adjust back to the hybrid.

I know we talked about months ago about how our hybrid plan would look like. There is a good chance that it changes for our phase one return. We are trying to think of everything to keep everyone safe. Depending on a survey that is going to go out maybe next week to the community, how many people want to return versus virtual will then lead us to how many students will be in that classroom and then what we can accommodate, what hurdles do we have to get over and also taking advice from counsel on making sure that we are not violating anyone's rights as far as too many students in a class based upon all the information that was released from the Department of Ed.



We are going to make sure as a group that we are collaborating and meeting with the principals to make sure that scheduling wise – whatever needs to be thought about now for when we return will be dealt with. Any other needs of their buildings that they feel are needed to have the kids return. I think Mr. Tatum’s expectations are not far off as far as December 1<sup>st</sup>. I think the company that we hired to do the assessment has gone through a couple of buildings. I will follow up with them tomorrow and see where they are at, when they are finishing up and the timeline when they expect to be done. I know they have a team coming because we want to get it done as quick as possible. Hopefully by next week or the week after Mr. Tatum will have a report to go by to see what other hurdles are in front of us and to make sure that when we ask students and faculty to return, it is a safe environment with the right equipment that is going to minimize any COVID related incidences.

Mr. Nufrio stated you may have already heard but today on WJLP which is Jersey station – a bulletin came through indicated that the entire Newark School District will not be returning to in-person or otherwise until January. Mr. Tatum stated I did hear that this afternoon, thank you. Mr. Benaquista stated thank you for bringing that up. The other thing is if you are looking across the country, the rates are going up again and that is another thing that we are facing and when you talk about the safety of a child and staff in any aspect, you want to make sure you are making the right decision. I understand how Mr. Tatum feels when he wants to make sure all his “i’s” are dotted and all his “t’s” are crossed when he is talking about 50-70% or how many students and faculty it is back to our district, that we are bringing them back to a safe environment.

Mr. Tatum stated I reminded everyone in one of my earlier reports in August or September, my caution to everyone in connection with the district, board of education, faculty, the parents – I’m glad Mr. Nufrio and Mr. Benaquista interjected the points about the numbers going up because one of the things that I mentioned was everything we are doing is subject to any new orders by the Governor as well as the conditions that may prevail during that particular time with COVID cases. We are monitoring that as well. I know some of my colleagues in neighboring districts have had issues where certain schools were shut down. Simultaneously at some point in time we expect to have children back in school and that is why we continue to move towards the goal of some sort of re-entry but that may get delayed if the Governor or if some order that comes out and we will have to follow that.

I want to announce on Thursday we will be meeting with the district administration to talk about what we are talking about now. One thing that is pertinent that Mr. Benaquista touched upon was the schedule and the hybrid schedule. They were even thinking with the virtual is revamping the schedule to better meet the students’ needs and the ability for them to have more of a social/emotional time with their counselors and individualized interaction with the classroom teachers. We are looking at that for November 1<sup>st</sup>. As we put together a schedule that is designed for re-entry, that in and of itself may be modified in terms of what is the best possible schedule for our students under those environments. What we presented over the summer and going into September may very well be modified but it is also going to be with input from our staff. We met with teacher groups, our association and we are trying to make sure that everyone is on the same page.



Our Director of Technology, Mrs. Paul, has reported that the district has continued to receive all of our computers and equipment that is needed for our high school and moving equipment to our teaching staff as well as receiving computers for our lower grades.

More money has come in and the purchases have been made and we are waiting for some of those items to come in. It is positive that we are starting to receive some of the material. Mrs. Guilfoyle will give us a few minutes to update us on money, grant funds and all the stuff you are buying to make it look good when we are back into the schools.

Maureen Guilfoyle stated Mr. Benaquista touched on the some things that I have been working on. I received PPE orders from the principals of each school. I also received orders from Kim Conti and Linda Ionta – they put together an order for PPE for their departments. My administrative assistant, Maria Malang, has been very busy creating these purchase orders and now we wait for the orders to come in. We will continue to contact the companies to find out when their estimated delivery dates are and as Mr. Benaquista talked about the Plexiglas, that is the next order we are working on as well.

The computers are coming in and we got an answer for the ones that we just ordered for the Digital Divide Grant and they should be in somewhere the first week of November.

We have a new grant on the agenda tonight and that is for another \$500,000 and that I will look into purchasing more technology because that grant specifically speaks to ways on how to get your schools opened – Plexiglas, sanitizing products. We are looking at both ways – if we are going to stay virtual we need all students to have devices and eventually all the teachers to have devices. If we are going into the schools as we talked about, we want to make sure that the environment is safe for our students. We are working on both angles.

I heard there was going to be more funding. The first one was the CARES Act and we talked about how it wasn't the amount we thought it should be and the schools didn't know how they worked out the numbers; well it turned out that they didn't come up with the correct amounts and there will be more and I keep checking every day to see when we are going to get that new number. Mr. Tatum stated we will be happy with whatever the additional funding we get to achieve our objectives. Thank you for your input.

Just a reminder that after we meet with our building principals, hopefully in the near future, we will put out another parent survey once we have everything in place to see exactly where parents and teachers will all fit in and I think the certification from the architect is going to be paramount. The big piece is the ventilation because it helps to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in school buildings.

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you to everyone who spoke tonight, I think all your information was very insightful. Thank you for reporting to the Board and the community.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mrs. Ruiz, seconded by Dr. Francis, for adoption:

E-1. *Agenda item reported at October 13, 2020 worksession (Superintendent's Report of HIB for the period September 16 to October 13, 2020).*

E-1A. AFFIRM SUPERINTENDENT'S DETERMINATION OF HIB

Affirm the Superintendent's determination of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period September 16 to October 13, 2020, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-2. APPROVE UPDATED CONTRACT – COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

Approve updated Contract with the State of New Jersey, Department of Human Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, for educational services for a student in the district for the 2020-2021 school year, in accordance with the non-public information appended to the minutes.

E-3. APPROVE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN JOINT ICE HOCKEY PROGRAM

Approve participation of students from Township of Union Public Schools in a joint ice hockey program with students from Kenilworth Public Schools and Springfield Public Schools for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years.

E-4. APPROVE SCHOOL NURSING SERVICES PLAN

Approve the 2020-2021 Nursing Service Plan, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-5. APPROVE CURRICULUM

Approve the following curriculum, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

1. Mathematics Grade 3
2. Mathematics Grade 4
3. Mathematics Grade 5 (reapproval with Units 2-4)
4. Mathematics Grade 6 (reapproval with Units 2-4)

E-6. APPROVE TRANSPORTATION CONTRACT – MUJC

Approve the 2020-2021 regular school year transportation contract with the Morris-Union Jointure Commission, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-7. APPROVE UPDATED SCHOOL HEALTH STANDING ORDERS

Approve updated School Health Standing Orders for the 2020-2021 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-8. *Agenda item pulled at October 20, 2020 meeting (student club-UHS Halaqa)*

## DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Ruiz stated we spoke about this in the Education Committee as well as last week's worksession – E-8. Mrs. Minneci stated I was going to bring that up, I don't think we have gotten any other information.

Mr. Benaquista stated it was student brought forth and did obtain a teacher to volunteer to be the adviser. If we need information, since we are still virtual, we can table it and put it back on next month so we can get more information for the Board members. Mrs. Minneci stated I think it is a good idea since we talked about it twice and we haven't had any update. Mr. Taylor, can we pull this temporarily until next month?

Mr. Taylor stated the Superintendent is recommending it so he would have to pull it or the Board can vote to officially table it. I want to add that there is no stipend requested and typically stipends are negotiated with the union. Even though one isn't requested, doesn't mean the union can't assert a right for the employee to get it in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement. Mr. Tatum are you willing to pull this from consideration? Mr. Tatum stated since there are unanswered questions here and there certainly should be more backup with it to support the Board's questions, I would recommend that we pull this for tonight. Get the requested information and bring it back to the worksession in November.

Mr. Benaquista stated that has been a concern of Ms. Shannon who is the president of the association about the volunteering versus paid so I do think it is something that needs to be ironed out prior to more teachers volunteering to be in charge of clubs. Mr. Tatum stated not a problem at all, I think we can pull this.

Mr. Taylor stated move to accept the amendment to not include E-8 in that motion. Mrs. Ruiz stated I do. Dr. Francis stated I do but I just want to commend Ingrid Sores for doing something without having to get paid for it. We don't have a lot of that from people that is working in the district. I want to applaud her for that. Mr. Taylor stated it has been properly amended so you can vote on E-1 through E-7.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

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

## F-1. TREASURER'S REPORT

That the Treasurer's Report dated September 30, 2020 be accepted.

## F-2. SECRETARY'S REPORT

That the Secretary's Report dated September 30, 2020 be accepted.

**F-3. CERTIFY TREASURER'S AND SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11(a), I certify that as of September 30, 2020 no budgetary line item account has obligations and payments (contractual orders) which in total exceed the amount appropriated by the district Board of education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8 and 18:22-8.1.

/s/ Diane Cappiello

Diane Cappiello, Acting Board Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_ Dated

Pursuant to N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.2(h), we certify that as of September 30, 2020 after review of the secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials that to the best of our knowledge no major account or fund has been over-expended in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.2(d)3 and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year. This certification is solely based on the information provided by the School Business Administrator and Board Secretary and is assumed by the Board to be correct.

**F-4. APPROVE APPROPRIATION TRANSFERS**

Approve appropriation transfers in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**F-5. APPROVE LIST OF CONTRACTS/PURCHASE ORDERS**

Approve the attached list of contracts and/or purchase orders pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-5 (bid exceptions to requirement for advertising) and 18A:18A-10(a) (purchase through State agency; procedure), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**F-6. APPROVE DISTRICT WIDE TRAVEL AND RELATED EXPENSES**

Approve district wide travel and related expenses pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12, N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7 and Board Policy File Code 6471 and in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**F-7. APPROVE AMENDMENT TO FY21 ESEA GRANT**

Approve amendment to the FY21 ESEA Grant which will be submitted due to the FY20 ESEA carry-over funds needing to be budgeted and as stated as follows: (a) Title IA - \$54,095; (b) Title IIA - \$35,987, (c) Title III - \$10,473, (d) Title III Immigrant - \$6,000, (e) Title IV - \$51,889 for a total of \$158,444, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**F-8. APPROVE LIST OF 2020-2021 STATE CONTRACT VENDORS**

Approve the amended list of the 2020-2021 State Contract Vendors pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-10(a) (purchase through State agency; procedure) to facilitate schools' purchasing, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**F-9. ACCEPT CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND (CRF)**

Approve acceptance of the Coronavirus Relief Fund in the amount of \$508,303, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

## F-10. APPROVE 2020-2021 OUT-OF-DISTRICT STUDENT PLACEMENT LIST

Approval be given to amend the 2020-2021 out-of-district student placement list, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-11. *Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (Family Center at Montclair-mental health screenings).*

F-12. *Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute-Career Development Services).*

## F-13. ACCEPT DONATIONS

Accept the following donations, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes:

From	For Use By	\$/Item
Union County American Legion Ladies Auxiliary Units #328 & 3	Students districtwide	School supplies, ear buds and timers

## F-14. APPROVE COMPREHENSIVE MAINTENANCE PLAN REPORT

Approve the Comprehensive Maintenance Plan Report (FY20, budgeted FY21 and Planned FY22), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

## F-15. APPROVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE BUDGET AMOUNT WORKSHEET (M-1)

Approve the Annual Maintenance Budget Amount Worksheet (M-1) pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:26A, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-16. *Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (award of lease purchase bid-US Bancorp for buses).*

## F-17. APPROVE FUNDRAISERS

Approve the following fundraisers, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes:

Event Name	Date	Purpose
Advertisements	October 21 - December 20, 2020	UHSPAC – to raise funds for UHSPAC fall/spring productions
Gertrude Hawk Candy Sale	October 21, 2020 - May 31, 2021	Interact Club – to raise funds to support both local and international projects/charities for Interact Clubs by Rotary International
UHSPAC Apparel Sale	November 1- December 1, 2020	UHSPAC – to raise funds for fall production

## F-18. APPROVED LIST OF CONTRACTS/PURCHASES (STUDENT ACTIVITY)

Approve the attached list of contracts and/or purchases pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-5(21) (paid by funds raised by or collected by students), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes:



School	Account/Department	Vendor/Description	Amount
Union High School	2016/School Projects	International E-Z Up – to provide tents for outdoor school events	\$4,010.28

F-19. APPROVE GRANT AWARDS – PLAY UNIFIED

Approve the following grant awards for Play Unified 2020-2021 grant applications previously submitted: (a) Union High School - \$2,900.00; (b) Burnet Middle School - \$2,500.00; (c) Kawameeh Middle School - \$2,000.00.

F-20. ACCEPT NONPUBLIC SCHOOL NURSING AID FROM NJDOE

Accept Nonpublic School Nursing Aid from the New Jersey Department of Education for the 2020-2021 school year as follows: St. Michael’s School - \$32,538.00, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-21. ACCEPT NON PUBLIC SCHOOL TEXTBOOK AID FROM NJDOE

Accept Nonpublic School Textbook Aid from the New Jersey Department of Education for the 2020-2021 school year as follows: St. Michael’s School - \$19,488.00, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-22. ACCEPT STATE AID UNDER CHAPTERS 192 AND 193 FROM NJDOE

Accept State Aid under for services under (a) Chapter 192, in the amount of \$113,953.00 and (b) Chapter 193, in the amount of \$37,033.00, for the total amount of \$150,986.00, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-23. *Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (Bergen County Special Services Educational Enterprises-Augmentative Evaluations).*

F-24. *Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (Trinitas Healthcare Children Therapy Services).*

F-25. *Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (Kid Clan Services-Educational/Psychological Evaluations).*

F-26. *Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (Learning Tree Multilingual Evaluation and Consulting-Educational/Psychological Evaluations).*

F-27. ACCEPT NONPUBLIC SCHOOL SECURITY AID FROM NJDOE

Accept Nonpublic School Security Aid from the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) for the 2020-2021 school year as follows: St. Michael’s School - \$55,825.0, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-28. *For informational purposes only – vote not required.* List of legal services for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**F-29. APPROVE ACCEPTANCE OF NJSIG SAFETY GRANT**

Approve acceptance of New Jersey Schools Insurance Group (NJSIG) Safety Grant in the amount of \$32,945.98.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

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

**NAY:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Operations Committee Resolutions:**

Mrs. Minneci stated I was informed that Mr. Riggle would like to speak about the ESIP.

Mr. Riggle stated I don't have too much to say but I raised my hand when there were some questions in case the Board needed any more technical clarification. I wanted you to know I was there and available to answer any questions. It sounded like it was o.k. but if there are any other questions, I'm here otherwise I will let you continue.

Mrs. Richardson stated when the Operations Committee met and Mr. Loessel was there, we did discuss the conditions of the roofs of various schools. I know that the Board had to approve a third-party verifier to do an inspection before Schneider Electric could go forward with the project and the solar panels. I recall this discussion we had a few months ago. A third-party did come in and made recommendations on what roofs needed to be repaired and it wasn't going to cost that much money and I believe Schneider Electric was going to work on that as well with solar panels.

Mrs. Riggle stated that is correct. We did a full assessment of the roofing conditions. Some are older and need to be replaced. Within the project there is about 400,000 square feet which is across six of the schools – some are the entire roofs and some are sections that need to be replaced will be new roofs before any solar would be installed on top. The roofs that have been replaced recently, we would work with each of the different manufacturers to maintain those warranties to insure that the roofing manufacturer will maintain that warranty for the length of the solar installed for 15 years.

Mrs. Richardson stated I just wanted it to be clear to the Board because the question did come up during public comments and we were aware of this and we did vote on the third-party to come in so it wouldn't just be Schneider Electric doing it, this third-party would come in and we approved that third-party to do so. Mr. Loessel had been working with them and reported to us before the Board approved it and reported the findings of the inspection to the Board as well in operations.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mrs. Richardson, seconded by Mrs. Higgins, for adoption:

O-1. APPROVE SECURITY DRILL/BUS EVACUATION REPORTS

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:41-1 and P.L. 2009, Chapter 178, approve the following security drill and bus evacuation reports for the 2020-2021 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

O-2. APPROVE SCHOOL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Approve School Emergency Management Plan for the 2020-2021 school year, in accordance with the non-public information appended to the minutes.

O-3. APPROVE REVISED ENERGY SERVICES CONTRACT (ESIP)

Approve revised Energy Services Contract with Schneider Electric Buildings America, Inc. in connection with the district's Energy Savings Improvement Program (ESIP), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

O-4. APPROVE ESIP RESOLUTION

Approve a resolution of the Board of Education approving (a) the separation of the ESIP into Phase I and Phase II, and (b) the use of competitive contracting for a second round of solicitation of proposals for a power purchase agreement, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

O-5. APPROVE UNIFORM STATE MOA – LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

Approve 2019 Revisions to Uniform State Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials, in accordance with the non-public information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Francis stated I received the email from Mrs. Cappiello concerning the Energy Savings Plan – Phase I and Phase II documents. I figured we would have some time to read through that? This is what Mr. Nufrio requested be sent. I wasn't sure if we were going to be talking about it more or have time to look it over and go over it before voting. Mrs. Richardson stated I guess that is up to the Board. I know time is of the essence.

Mr. Nufrio stated I didn't intend in any way delay the vote, it was simply to look at something I was not able to view. I fully support it.

Dr. Francis stated I was just asking what we were going to do. Mrs. Richardson stated when we went into this agreement it was one project and now they came forward because they need to put it into two phases – phase one and phase two.

Mrs. Gorab stated this document is what you have seen before it is now just split into two phases. Mrs. Richardson stated that was my understanding. We also talked about the competitive contract for competitive interest rates. This is going to be financed but paid off by

the energy savings so the school district is not going to absorb any costs in this matter as long as we proceed in a timely manner.

Mrs. Gorab stated you are. There is another step after this even just for Phase I. As I said, in November we have to go to the Local Finance Board and then come back to you to approve the financing. There are a lot of steps to get there. Mrs. Richardson stated do we know if the Local Finance Board is meeting? Mrs. Gorab stated they meet once a month and we are going on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Richardson asked Dr. Francis if he had any more questions. Dr. Francis stated I'm o.k. If it is the same exact thing and you are just spreading it because of requirements by the State, then I'm o.k. Mrs. Gorab stated we are splitting it right now so the solar is in the second phase and we make sure it is done in the most economic fashion.

Mrs. Richardson stated at one point they were going to do the solar and then Schneider Electric said we should purchase them because we would get the rebates. We approved that as well. Mrs. Gorab stated that second phase can't move forward (inaudible). Mrs. Richardson stated it was all together and Schneider Electric that did it but now we are purchasing them, so we get the rebates, so we get the money back – we had to split it. Mrs. Gorab stated yes and by splitting it we are determining whether the Power Purchase Agreement or the acquisition is the better option for the Board.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

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

P-1A. PERSONNEL ACTIONS – NEW HIRES

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

P-1B PERSONNEL ACTIONS – EXTRA PAY

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

P-1C PERSONNEL ACTIONS – TRANSFERS

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

P-2. *Agenda item pulled at October 20, 2020 meeting (substitute lists)*



**P-3. ACCEPT LETTERS OF RESIGNATION/RETIREMENT**

Accept letters of resignation/retirement from the following staff:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Eff. Date</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Notes/ Corrections</u>
Diego Alvear	Teacher of Mathematics	UHS	11/24/2020	Resignation	Resignation Effective 11/24/2020 Requested resignation with 60 days' notice from 9/25/2020. Unless the district can release him sooner upon finding replacement.
Peter Chinnici	Teacher of Special Education	UHS	1/1/2021	Retirement	
Juan Gutierrez	Custodian	Hannah Caldwell	10/20/2020	Resignation	
Jamie Navarrete	Paraprofessional-Special Services	UHS	9/30/2020	Resignation	
Michelle Prendergast	Educational Clerk-Library	Hannah Caldwell	1/1/2021	Retirement	
Tara Sterling	Teacher of Television Production	UHS	12/8/2020	Resignation	
Tommy Harrell	Supervisor of Science and Career Education	Districtwide	10/16/2020	Resignation	

**P-4. APPROVE LEAVES**

Approve leaves for the following staff:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Leave Dates</b>	<b>Leave Type</b>	<b>Notes/ Corrections: All tentative approvals are pending required documentation.</b>

Elisa Hahn	Elementary Teacher	Livingston	11/9/2020- 4/14/2021 Return: 4/15/2021	Paid Child Rearing Leave and Unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (Concurrently)	FMLA/NJFLA entitlement not to exceed 12 weeks (Concurrently)
Robin Kelly	Assistant Teacher-Pre-K	Hannah Caldwell	9/28/2020- 6/30/2021	Intermittent FMLA/NJFLA (Concurrently)	FMLA/NJFLA entitlement not to exceed 12 weeks (Concurrently)
Ovidio Lopez	Custodian	Washington	Extension Tentative Return: 11/1/2020	Extension of Paid Medical Leave	Leave began 2/26/2020
Erin Marabuto	Elementary Teacher	Conn Farms	Extension Return 1/4/2021	Extension of Unpaid Child Rearing Leave under FMLA/NJFLA (Concurrently) Return 1/4/2021	FMLA/NJFLA entitlement not to exceed 12 weeks (Concurrently)
Laura O'Holla	Elementary Teacher	Jefferson	10/8/2020- 12/30/2020	Leave under FFCRA for 12 weeks	FFCRA (Families First Coronavirus Response Act) Entitlement not to exceed 12 weeks or until 12/30/2020
Robin Raffaele	Teacher of Language Arts	BMS	9/3/2020- 10/6/2020	Paid Medical Leave	
Nicole Placca	Teacher of Spanish	UHS	Extension Return 2/1/2021	Extension of current unpaid FMLA leave followed by Unpaid Non FMLA	Org. return 11/30/2020 FMLA exhausted after the first unpaid 12 weeks

Dianne Vassallo	12 Month Clerical/Secretarial	UHS	9/9/2020-11/25/2020	Paid Medical Leave	
Frances Siino	Elementary Teacher	Franklin	10/12/2020-3/1/2021	Intermittent FMLA	FMLA entitlement not to exceed 12 weeks
Ann Lang	Elementary Teacher	Battle Hill	Intermittent - Extension through 10/28/21	Intermittent FMLA/NJFLA ( Concurrently)	FMLA/NJFLA entitlement not to exceed 12 weeks in total (12 weeks in 24-month period) (Concurrently) from org. start of leave 10/29/2019
Lisa Rosa	Teacher of Special Education	Battle Hill	Extension Return 1/4/2021	Extension of unpaid FMLA/NJFLA	FMLA/NJFLA entitlement not to exceed 12 weeks
Aime Osborne	Teacher of Special Education	UHS	Extension Return 10/13/2020	Extension of paid medical leave	

**P-5. APPROVE STUDENT TEACHERS AND INTERNSHIPS**

Approve student teachers and internships for the 2020-2021 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**P-6. APPROVE CUSTODIAN OF RECORDS – MANOCHIO**

Approve Fernanda Manochio as Custodian of School Records for the 2020-2021 school year, at no cost to the District.

**P-7. APPROVE DISTRICT COMMUNICATION LIAISON – SPEKHARDT**

Approve William Spekhardt as the communication liaison to local law enforcement agencies for the 2020-2021 school year, at no cost to the district.

**P-8. APPROVE AFFILIATION AGREEMENT – KEAN UNIVERSITY**

Approve Affiliation Agreement for clinical experiences and practices between Kean University and the Township of Union Public Schools, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-9. APPROVE AFFILIATION AGREEMENT – SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

Approve Affiliation Agreement for clinical experiences and practices between Seton Hall University and the Township of Union Public Schools, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-10. APPROVE AFFILIATION AGREEMENT – PACE UNIVERSITY

Approve Affiliation Agreement for clinical experience and practices between Pace University and the Township of Union Public Schools, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-11. APPROVE AFFILIATION AGREEMENT – NJCU

Approve Affiliation Agreement for clinical experience and practices between New Jersey City University and the Township of Union Public Schools, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-12. APPROVE CHANGE OF SALARY CLASS #3 – EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 2020

Approve Change of Salary Class #3 (effective September 2020), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-13. APPROVE ADMINISTRATOR – DOCTORATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Approve Sandra Paul to proceed with her research to qualify for the completion of the American College of Education Doctorate Program in Educational Leadership, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-14. APPROVE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICER–AWARDING CONTRACTS-MANOCHIO

Approve Fernanda Manochio as Affirmative Action Officer for awarding contracts for the 2020-2021 school year under P.L. 1975, c. 127, at no cost to the District.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Higgins asked what does P-13 mean exactly? Mr. Tatum stated she is at the phase of her research of her doctorate program and most doctorate program require that in order for a study to be conducted in the district, the Board needs to pass a resolution as evidence that they are giving the candidate an opportunity to do the research in the district. It is standard in most doctoral programs and sometimes we get requests from people outside of the district and we have approved a few but some topics don't go hand-in-hand with our district and we don't even present those to the Board. This is one of our employees.

Mr. Nufrio stated P-8 – local university – Kean – I had heard that there were some hic ups with regards to their finalizing their candidates. Have you heard anything about that Mr. Benaquista? Because of all of this that is going on for all of us, not all of the individuals were forwarded in terms of approvals. Mr. Benaquista stated the only thing that I'm aware of and I'm working with Kean on the logistics of certain requirements they need because we are remote. There was some guidance as far as student teaching. We need to support the student teachers and they need certain access which they normally wouldn't need because they would be in our



buildings. We are working through any issues that the university has for requirements. If I feel it is something that needs to go and just get the opinion of our attorney, I'll do that but if the evidence in the documentation from the Department of Ed, then we will get it approved and work through the issues. I have been in communication with Kean and will continue to figure try to figure out any body that is out there that still needs resources from us, we will make sure we will take care of that. Mr. Nufrio stated thank you.

Mrs. Richardson stated I received an email from someone who is trying to find an intern placement for student counseling. Are any schools opening up for internships for student counseling? Mr. Benaquista stated we do take on counselors within the counseling department with Mrs. Ahern as well as certain positions within special education. If you know of any schools that are trying to place students, we do get certain things approved and we have agreements with them. If it is another university or college we haven't worked with, you can send them my way.

Mr. Tatum stated a lot of times we have to also consider is we actually have the program or the actual people in the district to take on that program. It is also taking on student teachers and interns, depending on what their specialty is.

Mrs. Ruiz stated P-3 – one of the resignations, that is going to impact our academy for debate and public policy and that was really a great program. I saw personally the positive impact it had our students both at Burnet and Kawameeh. I hope that someone is going to take over that afterschool club because it was a great program for our students. I really saw them flourish and grow as far as their oratory skills, research skills and even just working as a team, leadership within the program. I hope that someone takes on the charge and continues to do a great job with it because Mr. Harrell did a great job with it.

Mr. Tatum stated as we talk about reorganizing some of our departments with the departure of Mr. Harrell, there have been staff members that have actually been working the program that may express an interest in taking that program over. I am happy to announce that in doing our budget, we may have tiered down some of the money that we had but to my knowledge we did not cut that program out of the budget. We were successful at restoring that program and Mr. Harrell did a great job as far as the design and I know if there are folks that worked with him before, that they would like to maintain the program, I know he would be a phone call away – he expressed that to me already. He and I together did a lot of work putting this program back into place. So I agree with you 100%. After we reorganize that is something that we will consider when we look at where we are in this school year and how that can be phased back in as we talk about re-entry and/or extracurricular.

Dr. Francis asked was he still doing the academies? Mr. Tatum stated that is what Mrs. Ruiz was referring to. Dr. Francis stated he was also doing the debate team too. Mr. Tatum stated that was all incorporated into one – the debate and public speaking, there were a couple of components to make it a little different than the way the other academies were in previous years. I know students really looked forward to doing that. The foundational concept was the same.

Dr. Francis stated P-1B – there is an acronym NJHS – what is that? Mr. Tatum stated during Mr. Harrell’s absence, I think we talked about this in personnel, we had to reassign some of the workloads to various individuals of departments he was supervising. What we did in his absence was as individuals took over his responsibilities, we put together a small compensation for those individuals – it is nominal. As we do the reorganization of the departments with the departure of Mr. Harrell, those stipends will then be phased out and there will be individuals doing those jobs. There may even be a cost savings at the end of the day.

Dr. Francis stated this is not the principals/administrators – this is in the extra pay. Mr. Tatum stated I’m sorry I’m on the wrong one. Mr. Benaquista stated NJHS stands for New Jersey Honor Society. Certain clubs were approved to continue virtually. The ones that have additional requirements, especially the National Honor Society; the yearbook has to work now to get the yearbook out by the end of the year. The Board did approve certain clubs that need to be in effect virtually but the other clubs won’t start until we return to in-person learning.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mr. Nufrio (employee #10897)

MOTION CARRIED

Policy Committee:

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mr. Nufrio, that the Access and Equity Policy be tabled and referred back to the Policy Committee for further review and analysis:

*POL-1. Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (Policy 4111 – Recruitment, Selection and Hiring).*

*POL-2. Agenda item pulled at October 20, 2020 meeting (access and equity policy) to be brought back to committee for review and analysis.*

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Ruiz asked why was the request made to our Board attorney to prepare a legal analysis regarding Policy 2 which speaks directly to our students education and yet there was no request for a legal analysis for Policy 1 which was passed last week despite the fact that policy is in direct conflict with one of our bylaws? Why was that done? Mrs. Minneci stated this has to do with the everyday operations of the school district, the students, the curriculum and because the administration, meaning Mr. Tatum, Mrs. Moses and Mr. Benaquista, are supposed to be involved with it. I want to send it back so it is done properly. You were in the discussion yesterday Mrs. Ruiz, with Mrs. Moses, and I thought it was a very healthy and good discussion as to reasons why. There is nothing we have to update because we have the policy and to infuse what Dr. Morgan has brought forward into our current policy.

Mrs. Ruiz stated not really related to the discussion we had yesterday Mrs. Minneci because I thought we had a productive discussion in the education committee but someone spoke

earlier about due diligence and do due diligence with this policy so why isn't that done for every policy. We currently have a policy on the books now that is in direct conflict with one of our bylaws. There was no due diligence on that policy. If we are going to apply certain standards and protocols, then let's do it equally across the board and that is not what is happening and this Board continues to do that. I also wanted to bring that to the Board and public's attention because it doesn't make sense to me and it doesn't seem appropriate that we have a policy on the record that this Board pushed through knowing that it was in conflict with our bylaw because Mr. McDowell brought that issue up and those that voted yes for that policy ignored the conflict, did not seek a legal analysis to address that conflict and just pushed it through because there was an agenda and now here we have a policy that now we get a four-page memo with twenty-three attachments to the memo. Mr. Taylor your law firm did send that memo to the policy committee today and I got it at 4:03 p.m. I have job so I didn't have time to read that memo or the attachments before this meeting. I'm not sure if anyone else on the policy committee had a chance to read it. If we are going to talk about due diligence, those are really cute fancy words – mean it – just don't say them. Where was the due diligence last week's policy – Policy 1 – there was none and we can prove it because it is in direct conflict with one of our bylaws and there was never a legal analysis on that. We never requested a legal analysis before this policy. You made the motion Mrs. Minneci, that is my comment and it is out there. We will vote and I know how the vote is going to go. I pretty much can predict it but I just wanted to put that out there.

Mrs. Minneci stated Mr. Taylor do you want to respond? Mr. Taylor stated the issue on the table this evening is Policy 2 not Policy 1. There was a lot of discussion about both and the reality is that the first policy is really more of a governance issue, it doesn't impact the day-to-day administration of the district. As I indicated last week, there was no need legally or procedurally or ethically to consult with the administration about any laws, any educational issues, etc. If to the extent it conflicts with a bylaw, then the remedy is simply to address and update that bylaw.

With respect to Policy 2 there was more discussion last week than earlier this evening and essentially the memo that my firm wrote essentially memorialized all the questions and concerns that were raised last week directly to Dr. Morgan as well as other Board members in connection with that policy. Not with the intent to oppose the policy, I preference my comments this evening very artfully and carefully and succinctly and specifically my comments are not in opposition to this policy. My comments were in reference to your duties pursuant to your own policy manual to investigate matters. We talked about your current policy File Code 9311 – formulation, adoption and amendment of policies. Subsection (a) – it says development of clear, workable, legal policies that reflect mature consideration of the will and needs of the community. There were many comments from Board members and the public about the proposed policy not being clear. There were comments from legal counsel about it not being workable in terms of implementing it and/or legal with respect to (inaudible) considerations, fiscal considerations, educational considerations regarding eligibility for advance placement etc.

The recommendation is not in opposition to the policy. The recommendation is to make the policy, clear, workable and legal so that it can be enforced and not expose this Board to more exposure or liability. The comments I said earlier which are incorporated here; again there is another policy on point – a lot of the comments from the public dealt with the lack of

enforcement of the existing policy. The reality is the Board can direct the administration to comply with the existing policy rather than creating a new one that is not enforceable legally, procedurally or practically. Thank you Madam President.

Dr. Morgan stated I brought this policy forth last week. I brought it forth because I have been addressing the equity issue or the lack of equity in this district since I got on this Board in 2019. I asked to discuss the lack of teachers of color, in this district, I asked to discuss the discipline effort in this district and during our planning meeting this past August, I even asked to discuss access courses. Each time I have been ignored and basically dismissed. Mr. Taylor, my concerns have been brought to administration and I'm sure there are minutes that people can point to where I have asked to discuss these items. I had offline conversations with Mr. Tatum and Mrs. Moses going back years about my concerns about the lack of equity in this district, starting with my son who was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade then who is now in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade – so that is seven years where I have been basically unhappy with the lack of equity opportunities for students of color.

On September 8<sup>th</sup> during a worksession, I asked why the 6<sup>th</sup> grade accelerated math curriculum was disbanded because now I have son, and here we are seven years later and I'm faced with another issue, and my son's friends are faced with the same issue and my friends are faced with the same issue. Seven years later we have not addressed this issue. Now this 6<sup>th</sup> grade math has been disbanded for a child who is an A+++ student, a child who has exceeded expectations on every PARCC exam he has taken. Now he is taking a regular math class and he is bored. We always address our special education as we should, we address our ESL as we should but we are not addressing our gifted students. Yes we have gifted and talented but that is not enough.

I am disappointed that we are going back to the table and I expected this, I didn't expect it to pass tonight but at least the conversation has started. I have been asking for these things to be addressed for almost two years. We are continuing to lose African American administrators, we are continuing to lose African American teachers. Our students, even though they meet the criteria, again my son is in 11<sup>th</sup> grade now and he was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, he had a perfect score on the PARCC, a perfect 300 but yet he was left out of the class because the teacher did not give a recommendation. My question was why didn't she give the recommendation. After I fought Dr. Lishak, she had to agree with me because I had all of my data. Here we are seven years later and we are still facing the same issue.

Now Mr. Taylor wants to bring up Policy 5145 and it just so happened I printed the same thing. It does say that students should have access to all courses but after what I just said, that is not happening. It is not happening for me, it is not happening for my son's friends, it is not happening for friends I have made in Union.

In addition to that, someone brought up 6140 – curriculum adoption. No course of study shall be eliminated, revised or implemented without the approval of the Board. I do not recall being on the Board if and when the 6<sup>th</sup> grade math course was taken away. If someone can find when it was Board approved, please let me know. I don't recall it happening not since I have been on the Board. Maybe it happened before I got on the Board.



To address members of the community where they are saying that we are asking for a handout, I am not asking for a handout. If students do not deserve to be in the course, they should not be there; however, there are students that I know who have the right to be there and has not had the right to go into the course because of a teacher recommendation. If you add up the scores, your test results and everything else, why do we need the teacher recommendation? The teacher recommendation should only help it should not hurt students from getting into the course.

I just wanted to express to the community it is not that I am expecting everyone to get in, I just want a policy that states that if you meet certain criteria, without the teacher recommendation, then you should have the right to get in because we have been addressing this issue for seven years. Right Dr. Francis – that is how we met – addressing this issue. Now I'm on the Board and we are playing games and I'm not here to play games. I want what is best for all children. Specifically, our black boys who are not getting an opportunity to be in these classes. I suggest if we are going back to the table, I need to be part of the discussion. I am not on the Policy Committee but if you want to have more conversation about it, I can do it. It shouldn't have taken me to bring a policy from the floor to get this done. Thank you.

Mr. Taylor stated Dr. Morgan, again my comments were not in opposition from a legal standpoint. Dr. Morgan stated I understand but I just wanted to get that out that I don't want people to think that everyone can get in. I am concerned about those kids that meet the criteria but because whether a teacher doesn't like the kid, the parent or for whatever reason, the kid didn't get in and that is not fair; that is not fair for children that work hard.

Mr. Taylor stated to my point and in further support of my recommendation to refer this back to committee is your explanation and comments and support of the policy are substantially different than what the policy says. That is why it should be in committee to vet it and get it in a proper form that has a consensus of the Board to move it forward (inaudible). I have my notes in front of me from October 13, 2020 and that is when it was discussed and that I would get a copy of the policy from you; I actually got it from Mrs. Cappiello a day or two later, so there was no secret or side request to do a memo, it was with the full support and consent of the Board last week in preparation for this.

All we are trying to do is give you objective advice so you can make informed decisions but also decisions that are supported by the law and existing policies and regulations because this has a lot of layers to it. I think your points are very well taken and they should be reviewed by the committee. The committee has four members on it so if you were to attend the meeting, that would be a quorum so the Board would either have to decide to address this policy as a committee as a whole or there could be some other accommodation made and I would refer to the Board president with respect to the composition of the committee. Thank you.

Dr. Francis asked who are the members besides Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Ruiz and Mrs. Williams? Mrs. Minneci stated Mrs. Higgins.

Dr. Francis stated I like the policy, the policy in spirit is a very good policy. I didn't think this policy was going to pass tonight. It seems that we would always rush to approve a policy that has nothing to do with kids but more to do with Board members and not allowing Board members to be hired for two years and you have a policy that is doing stuff for children, especially brown and black children, and that would be a policy that you would knock down really fast. I agree with only one thing you said Mr. Taylor about what makes this policy maybe problematic – it is probably the budgetary line – it is asking to set a budgetary guideline – maybe that is the only thing. I want to say this – we were in negotiations for the teachers' contract; in terms of money and money is not there, they find ways to find the money Mr. Taylor. That being said, I think the policy within itself can have some minor changes in there – very minor changes but for the spirit of it, it is a very good policy and I will leave it up to the policy committee to vet it as you say.

I had an experience with my son as well taking advanced course. He has 2 AP courses already and his schedule wouldn't allow him to take Spanish III so he had to choose. The guidance counselor sent him a list of classes that he could take and one of them was an AP class – AP psychology. He had no interest in any of the other classes but he was interested in psychology and he wanted to take it. The only problem was the deadline had happened months ago; the guidance counselor told him he could not take that course because he didn't meet the deadline which is silly – it is silly to me. Thanks to Mrs. Moses, I have to give her all the credit, I told Mrs. Moses the situation – my son really wants to take Spanish III but he can only take these courses and he isn't interested in any of them except for the AP course. My son doesn't want to take an AP course, that is up to him. In this case he wanted to take it. I didn't see the harm and she made it happen. I say thank you to Mrs. Moses because Mrs. Moses taught me one thing ever since I have been on this Board. She has always been about the children and if you are not about the children, you are in the wrong business and that is just plain and simple. If you are not about doing what is right for the children, then you don't need to be in education. We as Board members shouldn't even be on the Board because for me, I'm not getting paid to do this, I do this because of my children and I do because of all the other children. I spend my hardworking money every year trying to find good people to run for this Board. Every year, my money, and I'm doing it pro bono – every year. I hope I got your attention Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor stated you have my attention sir, again your comments are very well taken; however, for instance, the financial impact and requirement of this proposal was probably the least of my concerns. Dr. Francis stated I think legally we might have some issues.

Mr. Taylor stated as I indicated, if you pass this policy tonight, this policy that has budgetary requirements to fund afterschool, tutorial and summer tutorial, you have not heard one word and you haven't asked your superintendent nor has he volunteered whether there is money available tomorrow for an afterschool program. Why would you as a Board put yourself in a position to have a 100 parents next month complaining to you that they applied to Mr. Tatum to in furtherance of this equity policy that you fought for that you championed but you didn't set forth the money and appropriate the money to support the policy, now you are in violation of the very policy that you approved.

All I'm saying is that it should be tabled for further discussion from an economic standpoint, as well as the half a dozen legal and educational considerations that were raised regarding special education, access from not a local Union Township considerations but what the State and/or County considerations and rules may be and legal pre-requisite to admittance to an AP course or what have you.

Again, there are a number of issues. I think everyone has the best of intentions here and it is a process that if tabled, I'm sure it can be ironed out and worked out by you and your colleagues.

Mrs. Minneci stated I was in the meeting with Mrs. Moses and I have the highest regards for Mrs. Moses. I'm really sorry to see that she is leaving because she brings so much to the district. In our discussion, we talked about language, the finance because there is going to be an increase in staff, afterschool programs and these are all the things that need to be worked out.

She said this past summer we were able to have some programs during the summer for our higher level students – AP/Honor students – because of not using money for field trips in the spring. She said we need to be able to budget so that we can do all these things. Mrs. Ruiz, you were there and heard the conversation. She was on vacation and she spends a few hours yesterday in a couple of meetings, she spent some time with me today. We talked about it again. I didn't say this just to throw it back to committee. I think it is definitely something we need to do but we need to do it properly. To make sure it is set up so we protect our students and the district in all ways. I just wanted to put that out there. It has everything to do with our kids. They are entitled to everything that we have and all students are entitled if they so wish. I wanted to put that out there that I had lengthy discussions with Mrs. Moses about this yesterday and today. Like I said, she took time out of her vacation to talk to us at the committees and today.

Mrs. Higgins stated this goes back to what Dr. Morgan said and my experience. My oldest daughter, terrible test taker, but very smart and somebody believed in her and put her in the gifted and talented and she flourished. She did wonderful. The next year, there was a teacher that just went by the numbers and that was the end of it for her. I had an experience with my older daughter who got into AP math, it wasn't right for her she is a film student, she is creative, she doesn't want to do that. It was horrible, terrible, and tortuous so both spectrums, I understand it and I support it and am in total agreement with it. The only thing I believe in was what Mrs. Minneci said, the financial part and getting all the appropriate partners together to make sure that everything is line but I absolutely understand how important it is and how it would be beneficial to all the students.

Dr. Morgan stated thank you for that Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Minneci but again I just hope that we will continue this conversation next month because I have been bringing this up and this is not the first time you heard me say this. I need us to get this done because it is very important as students go into the new year, picking their courses for next year.

Mrs. Minneci stated we need to have several committee meetings – fiscal, education, as well as policy and get this all together so we can get this on the books as quickly as possible in the right way.

Mrs. Richardson asked is it the teacher that has to make the recommendation and not the guidance counselor? Dr. Morgan stated in my case it was the teacher. I pulled my son out because he didn't even feel comfortable going into Union High School but I do have a 6<sup>th</sup> grader here and the class was disbanded because according to Mrs. Moses, the lack of equity. Instead of us addressing the equity issue, we get rid of the class. We really have to look at our district and our district numbers. We are ranked in our SAT scores 232 out of 308, that is the bottom quarter and that tells me that our kids are not being exposed to rigorous course work because if they were, we would be making the mark. I don't see how this is acceptable in this district when we pay a lot of money to live here. It is not acceptable for my kid or any other kid and that is data you can prove in NJ.com right now in case anyone wants to check. We are in the bottom quarter of the State in SAT scores. That is not good. We are paying all this money to live in this Town and it tells me when I look at this performance report card that our students are not being exposed to rigorous courses in order to compete and take the SAT test.

Mrs. Richardson stated you feel they are not properly prepared. Dr. Morgan stated I don't feel they are and there are some that do well. There are many students from Union who go on and do fabulous things but that is not the majority. I need all of us to be successful – every child to be successful.

Mrs. Higgins stated I get that. I had my older daughter go to a private school, my younger one went to Union High School – it was different. Union High School was probably better than Union Catholic. Did you find a difference because you have two kids – one in public and one in private? Dr. Morgan stated I found the difference in the fact that I didn't have to fight for my kid to get into courses. He took one test and they immediately put him in the honors program. He scored so high they gave him a scholarship. I thank Union for that. I think his Algebra I teacher at Burnet, his Spanish teacher at Burnet – it tested right into Honors Spanish II as a freshman. He is taking AP physics – without any of this hoopla that many people go through. I don't think it needs to be that way. Children get discouraged when you are telling them no and they won't try again.

Mrs. Williams stated we had a much different experience and my son didn't go to Union High School, he went to another school, but he was in Honors and there were some kids that weren't there and psychologically it damaged them because it wasn't that these kids weren't smart; my son and his friends were really smart. His friends of Haitian, Filipino, Indian and African – there was one kid in that group and he ended up being the valedictorian but there were some kids that just didn't get it and that is what I don't want to happen. I don't want to see our kids fail because they are not quite ready or their parents want them to do this and they are just not ready yet.

Dr. Morgan stated that is where guidance comes and monitor these kids. I did this work when I was principal in Orange. I literally started dropping kids into AP and parents fought me on it and I wouldn't let them out. We made the AP honor roll two times because we were



recognized for exposing kids to higher rigorous curriculum and they were passing. They weren't passing at first but we started to put in summer programs. So you are right, the budget needs to be looked at. They were coming in the summer and taking AP pre-calc and I had a great teacher and then we started doing things and it is not going to happen overnight but I believe our students in Union can do it if given the opportunity.

Mrs. Minneci stated that is why we need to work on improving the policy and getting it out as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Richardson stated that is why I asked you Dr. Morgan if it was the teacher and is the guidance counselor involved at all. Dr. Morgan stated parents also need to be involved. Everyone needs to be involved. Mrs. Minneci stated the conversation I had with Mrs. Moses and that is what we talked about, all the stakeholders – the teachers, the students, the parents, the Board, the administration and that is her goal and her dream and we also said to Dr. Francis, anyone who really wanted and didn't meet quite the criteria was, she would make that call to have that student and not allow them to fail, give them the supports that they need. If it was too much, maybe go into a different class and then try again the next semester but to give them all the opportunities. I know she does that and she believes in that. That is where we need to go with this policy and that is why I think it needs to go back to committee so we can tweak it the way it needs to be tweaked and get it back on the agenda so we can approve it and get the ball rolling. Administration will help us make those committee. Mr. Tatum stated absolutely. I also attended the education committee last night as well as the policy committee and I guess I said this last week and I will say it again. Dr. Morgan puts on the table that she has made these recommendations and stuff like that and in prior years about equity and the other thing. What I find as an administration, and I have been one for a long time, one of the problems that we have in our district unfortunately is like my communication with the Vauxhall Civic Association, we met not too long ago. There is a written policy, there is a written curriculum and then there is practice and how it is administered and how it is taught. I think what I said last night and I will say it again openly and say it to the public, that the policy that was presented to us had some very good features in it. I think we talk about the legal end of it and Mr. Taylor talks about the equal access and stuff like that and we have that and I think those are the pieces we can all agree on that is in the current policy that is in place. The terminology reflects what we are trying to accomplish here is really what needs to be added there. You look at it from the standpoint of administering the policy and developing the policy – there is two sides of this whole thing and unfortunately administration can only be as good as the tools you have to work with. I will tell you right here and now, I have had it over and over again and I know I sound like a broken record but administering a district without cohesive policies brings on a whole other challenge and I have mentioned this also, there is also an aspect that we considered and I don't want to go into anything too much deeper than that in a public session; anything else I would have to say would probably be in a closed door meeting because there is no secret I'm leaving here very shortly. I will say the same things when I leave that I said 4-5 years ago about policy and procedure and about mindset. All those things have to be lined up for everything to work systematically. I know what Mrs. Moses has done and I will be honest with you, I think that despite our ranking Dr. Morgan, considering where we were, we almost accomplished somewhat a miracle, believe it or not, considering what we started with. We have not always had 100% support behind us. We have had to fight for everything that we have accomplished in this district



over the last 5-7 years. My question becomes this – yet there is still a lot more work to be done, but there was a lot of work that had to be done when we first started and we accomplished a lot of those things. Unfortunately one of the things we have not accomplished is what we talked about last night in the education/policy meetings – that sometimes our policies are updated for support an update that may happen in the State of New Jersey but doesn’t necessarily reflect what we need to do in the district and those are recommendations that in some case have been made and somethings we have been successful with, it has taken awhile, and somethings we have not been successful with. But that is incumbent upon the Board of Education working with the administration as has been illustrated tonight and also everyone being on the same page. I sometimes think we miss that mark here.

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you Mr. Tatum. We will send it back to committee and we will meet as different committees, as a Board, to get it all together.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Residency Committee Resolutions:

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

R-1. APPROVE LIST OF STUDENTS REMOVED FROM ROLLS

Approval be given to amend the list of students removed from the rolls [one (1) students exited as of October 2020 (1 from elementary) or a total of five (5) students for the 2020-2021 school year] who are not domiciled in this school district, in accordance with the non-public information appended to the minutes.

R-2. APPROVE TO REMOVE STUDENT

Approval to remove student #339567 from the attendance rolls as the student has been determined to be ineligible to attend the Township of Union Public Schools as a resident student.

Mr. Nufrio was not available at time of vote (10:15 p.m.).

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Technology Committee:

T-1. *Agenda item approved at October 13, 2020 worksession (agreement with T-Mobile for Education).*

Approval of Bills:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and moved by Mrs. Richardson, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the Board concur with the bills listed in the permanent bound register:

DISCUSSION:

None

Mr. Nufrio was not available at time of vote.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Unfinished Business:

Dr. Morgan asked where are we on the restart and recovery policy? I think the State sent it as #1648 – are we going to address that soon as we gear up for reopening? Mr. Tatum stated I would hope there would be some discussion. Mr. Benaquista and I were just talking yesterday about some of the policies that we intended to present that we received from neighboring districts. We do need to have a meeting very shortly regarding that policy and I have said this before, I have been suggesting but it has not happened, we really haven't had a policy meeting since last February. I have been saying month after month we need to have some overriding guidance for administering during this time period. Right now we are administering the district under the old guidelines and some of the things that we are trying to accomplish may fit in those policies. I was even asking to amend some of those things. Yes, I would agree with you that is something we need to get going – more sooner than later.

New Business:

Mrs. Minneci stated I know everybody is assigned a school as the liaison and I am the liaison for Hannah Caldwell and I just wanted to mention that Hannah Caldwell applied for a grant – a national grant – a COVID-19 grant and they were awarded \$5,000 which they have put to great use. The PTA distributed enrichment kits to all the students. There were reading materials – digitally and hard covered – distributed to each student in each classroom. They partnered with a local business to offer three yoga classes per week for eight weeks. They purchased a school-wide science experiment that they will use in all the grades. They set up a podcast for PTA meetings so they can meet virtually. They have a Q&A with psychologists to help bridge communication with the school and the families during virtual learning. They have hosted several COVID friendly socially distanced outdoor events – they had an ice cream social. They are working very hard. I'm sure the other schools are working just as hard but since I'm

the liaison this is the information I received and I work very closely with Mrs. Chase who is the PTA president and her board.

Sports – field hockey is 5-0; girls' cross-country team is 5-0; Cassidy Kim placed first at Newark Academy; boys' cross country is 3-2; boys' soccer 4-1; girls' soccer 3-2; football 1-2; all our teams are working hard. My husband and I walk at the track at the high school almost every day and after virtual learning I see all the sport teams out there working hard. I see Mrs. Ionta and Meg Berry taking temperatures, the kids are in pods, they have their face coverings. I can tell the kids are really happy to be out and moving around in the fresh air with their teammates. On a sad note, one of our former residents, student, he was a coach here – Brian Sheridan – we extend our condolences to his family. Mr. Sheridan was a native of Union and he was a two-time all-star for Union High School football. He was a four-time letter winner. He was captain of the Rutgers Football Team for two years and he was involved in coaching for the past 20 years. His last job was where he coached at American Heritage High School in Florida. It is sad that he passed away at a very young age. Our condolences to all his friends and family and former colleagues in our district.

Mr. McDowell stated Mr. Arminio would be proud.

Mr. Tatum stated you did a great job; however, nobody does sports like Mr. Arminio. We may need him to come back to do a workshop for us. A great job Mrs. Minneci.

Mrs. Richardson stated the Truck or Treat at Jefferson – they will be giving out little bags of candy this Saturday.

Comments from the Public:

Lyn Cornacchia stated I hope this meeting finds everybody well. I don't know if you had a chance to read my letter that I sent to you because the meeting you had back in September, I had open house and I was unable to attend the meeting. It was addressing the concerns of the staff members districtwide as far as reopening. I know that we have talked about the reopening of the buildings, not school, because we are teaching.

I do have a question for Mr. Benaquista, as you know I'm on a committee with you and certain things have to be addressed and one of the things that was not mentioned at all tonight was the nursing situation. There has to be a special area or location for somebody who has COVID to be separated from the public. I don't know if that is being addressed for consideration for being brought back when we come back to school. If the Board does decide to do the hybrid, is it going to be like how we planned in the summer? Two days in and three days off? Or is it going to be five days? If it is five days, how is deep cleaning going to be done in the buildings?

With the new cases arising in the State of New Jersey and two nearby school districts – Newark and Elizabeth – not returning until January 2021. I would ask that the Board consider possibly returning back to school in person-to-person in January 2021. This way you get through the holidays and you have ample enough time to make sure that all the proper measures from the CDC have been in place for all the schools and to ensure the safety of the staff and students.

Mr. McDowell stated we did read your letter at one of the meetings – I read it because you were at another meeting.

Nellis Regis-Darby stated thank you to all the Board members who are willing to work on and support the policy. Congrats to Ms. Paul. Thank you Mr. Tommy Harrell for all your services to our students in our district. I believe it was two meetings ago that Mr. Wojcik mentioned that there will be new technology for the students – has that been implemented? Also, at the elementary level do we know what is being done to ensure that all of our students have access to reading materials? I know some districts are using EPIC books. Do we know what this district is using especially for our Title I students? If we know what we are using, can the public know so we have access to that.

Before we were shut down we had the student liaisons, will they be reporting again to the community because that was a good addition to the Board?

On page 22 of the reopening plan, it states that the students and parents will be receiving a monthly schedule and a lot of, especially the elementary parents, are asking for that schedule so they can support their students during virtual learning. Do we know when that schedule will be going out because parents have not received that schedule yet?

Mr. Tatum stated we will address that issue at the meeting that we announced with our administrators on Thursday morning. We will get information out about that. As far as the Title I materials, I do know materials have been purchased. I will ask Mrs. Guilfoyle, who oversees Title I to take a look at what we have implemented in each of the buildings.

Mrs. Guilfoyle stated I have meetings going on with Franklin because they are schoolwide so we have a Title I schoolwide meeting coming up; Burnet, the same – schoolwide meeting. I met with all the principals to discuss what type of programs we would like to do and we are going to meet again this week.

Lilliana Almeida stated I sent an email to a couple of members of the Board and to the Superintendent regarding the returning of school and technology for our first graders, kindergarteners and pre-k. This email was still not answered. I have not received a response. A lot of parents are saying the same. Tonight's meeting we were again informed that we received more funds to purchase this technology, when is this technology going out to the kids? Have you considered maybe giving it to the first graders? Everybody needs it now but if you have enough for the first graders, give it to the first graders and then work your way back. This was information that was given to us with the plan for the hybrid to return to school and here we are November and still no computers for these children. Some of our kids are lucky enough to have parents who can provide them with a computer but there are still a lot of kids in our district who don't have this. If we are pushing back to December, which is another comment, you have to move a little faster. These children are lacking in their schooling because of this and our teachers are having a lot of issues with it.

In terms of pushing back to December 1<sup>st</sup> which I will naturally assume we are doing, this sounds like deflecting to me. Newark which is a bigger school district has made their call,

Elizabeth, Linden, Roselle Park – all our neighboring towns have made their decisions and have communicated it to the parents. They are not deflecting. If we are staying home until January, it is worth staying home until January. Linden – kids are already going back to school. Parents knew about this a month prior. Now you are sitting here and you are telling us two weeks before we were supposed to have an answer and now we are getting a third opinion – please take into consideration that parents have to make decisions regarding childcare and regarding the appropriate method of how our children are receiving their online education. I think you should be a little more considerate.

Mr. Tatum stated with all due respect I take exception to your saying anything about being deflected. The fact of the matter is we are reporting this information every month. Union Township has contingencies that other communities don't have. We always come in and talk about what other communities are doing, what are we doing in Union and what are the needs of all the families in Union and what are the needs of our teachers. Those are the things we are taking into consideration. I would love to have had the children in school in September. If it wasn't for the pandemic, they would be in school. Everyone in this administration is working hard to ensure that the children are safe. When you asked the question about why there was another assessment done, it was done in the spirit of safety and wellbeing of children and faculty and that is why the assessment was done. I didn't take the word of internal information that was given to me – I wanted a certification to show that we are not putting children in buildings that are unsafe.

One of the reasons why our staff could not return, and this is not new information, because of possible ventilation in this district. You also need to consider your budgetary concerns in Union. I have been fighting for 3-4 years to get more funding in our district. We continually, year after year, cut the maintenance budget and they service our buildings. I want somebody to start talking to me and become a partner about how we restored the money that was taken from us some years ago that had such a devastating impact on the students over the last 3-4 years. Yet the concerns that we have is that we are deflecting. I disagree with that. I think what we are really trying to do is to ensure safety and wellbeing. You are talking about districts that have a whole lot of different contingencies than what we have right now. How many of those districts that have gone back are also closed? And had to rethink it because maybe they rushed to judgement; nobody considers that.

Mrs. Almeida stated Linden is still open – it still hasn't closed. Roselle Park is putting it in place. Mr. Tatum stated I'm not one of those other districts and I disagree with that – I'm sorry. We are working extremely hard to try to ensure this district that the safety and wellbeing of these children and staff are taken into full consideration. We took a shift when the Governor said we could go all virtual, we said we have some of these conditions in our buildings, we will take this opportunity to try not to be forced to bring students back. We were being forced to bring students back to school from the mandate that we have that in-person instruction and then there was a fluctuation back and forth. We talked about curriculum and we talk about money issues – the money issues are spread out all over the place. We said we might have to reallocate money because of our shortfall in June. We had to reallocate money to ensure that students are able to go back into a safe building. This is not new. That is why I take exception to that. The funding source – I know Linden's budget, they have fewer students than us but they receive



more State aide. They have approximately 965 children less than Union yet their aide is different and that goes back to another big problem we have in the district. I have been verse to this for a number of years and I know what I'm talking about when it comes to the financial picture that we have in this district and the contingencies that we deal with in this district year after year – the needs of our teachers, the safety of our children, these are all the considerations that go into this but to deflect – I'm sorry, I disagree with that.

Mr. Taylor stated Mrs. Minneci, respectfully, the speakers time had expired. Mr. Tatum did respond on behalf of the administration which is appropriate. But the speakers time had expired. The public comment is not a back and forth. The public can ask their questions, make their comments, the administration or Board can respond.

Mr. Tatum stated people can say what they want to say tonight, I know what is going on here.

Susan Lipstein stated I am so proud of how many people came out to speak tonight about this policy. This involves education and the children. I want to thank Dr. Morgan for putting this out on the table. This is something worth to be pushed on. This problem has been here for years. If we have four Board members that had this issue and countless students, I think it is time. If we have a policy that covers this like Mr. Taylor said – it isn't working to the benefit of our children. It was real dialogue going on among all the Board members which is exactly how a functioning Board should work. I often thought that we did not have a Board that functions in a way this Board was working tonight. I expect this policy is not going to disappear. We won't let it. It showed a lot of leadership on the part of Dr. Morgan and the policy committee getting together and working on this and let's see this taken care of. Thank you.

Sienna Bucu stated thank you Mrs. Minneci for taking the suggesting and talking about the kids – no matter how long the meetings are. There were young people at the meeting tonight and those are things you should be happy about. My friends have graduated and I got them together to try to talk about this policy but I think it is really important to have young people have these conversations because they add a different perspective. You talked about all the stakeholders, I think the kids in college are good stakeholders and a good resource for you to have. I think they could be good insight about whether or not things work afterwards and what that looks like – I think that is important. I want to highlight something about this policy – it is really about choices. Allowing students to have choices is the best way to prepare them for life. Real life is making choices all the time and living with them. A kid making a choice to take a hard class and failing that class is a lesson. It is not just about a test. A kid not choosing to take a hard class and maybe taking an art class or whatever is a choice. Those are where educational experiences come from. Allowing kids to make choices and decision-making things on their own behalf is the highlight of what education can mean. The things they are doing for middle school for social/emotional learning and counseling are amazing. You can't make choices if you are not in a good head space. Making sure that everything we can do to make sure that children have choices is the roll of a board and the conversations that you had today made we hopeful. I have never been to a meeting where the conversations actually seem to be supportive of the kids in a real way. I'm grateful that tonight happened. I hope this policy is just the beginning. AP classes are just the start and making sure that every child wherever they are we need them so

they can make their choices would be great. If you ever want an alumni to come around – talk to us we can help. Everybody have a great night.

Libby Galante stated I would like to say how excited I am about the discussion about this policy. As a past supervisor, I feel that this has been a problem for years and I just wish I was still in the district so I could be there for the new changes that are going to come about. I would also like to say to Dr. Francis, almost an apology, that your son and you had to be told because of a deadline that he couldn't attend a class. AP and Honors process is a vigorous one and deadlines are put into effect only because for every part of it we have to have some sort of a cutoff date to collect all the applications, go through the applications, to go through the appeal process and so forth. But to say to someone because of a class change or an addition that they didn't meet a deadline is ridiculous and that shouldn't be. I'm glad that Mrs. Moses was able to step in and clear that up for you because your son more than deserved to be in that class. Thank you.

Dr. Francis stated Mrs. Galante, it wasn't a guidance counselor, the guidance counselor was trying to get him in but someone else was not budging and thank you.

Dr. Latee Watson-McCleod stated I am here tonight to speak to the Board of Education to ask when will I receive a response to a letter that I wrote in May when I was an employee with the Union Township Public Schools. In that letter I expressed some serious concerns. In addition to that letter, there was an investigation that was conducted as a result of several letters that were written about me – anonymous letters. I did not write an anonymous letter. I wrote a letter which I signed my name to. I asked for an investigation. That investigation has been completed and the report is sitting on someone's desk. As to date, I have not received a response from the Board Members, I have not received a response from Union Township Public Schools. My questions, my concerns, no answers – nothing. That letter did not only represent me but it represented other individuals that look like me and I feel that it is going unheard and that no one wants to address the issue. I have listened to this entire meeting and I heard Dr. Morgan speak about equity. I heard her speak about diversity. I hear other Board members speak about equity, they speak about diversity. You are losing good minority leadership. It is happening right in front of your face and no one is addressing the issue. I ask you today, when will I get a response. When will I receive the results of the investigation? When will the members of the Board of Education communicate with the attorneys that you hired to produce the results? Thank you.

Juan Acevedo stated I would like to applaud the relentless efforts of Dr. Morgan regarding Policy #2 on access and equity on behalf of young people, as well as the firm lift up from Ms. Ruiz, regarding the fair process and due diligence to all those policies brought to the attention of our Board. Please know and be reassured ladies, as a member of the community and as a man of strong faith, that both of your commentary has been received and recognized and I look forward to witnessing specifically the resolution of the policy at next month's meeting.

Kia Rosbury stated I wanted to acknowledge Mr. Harrell he was my kids' science teacher. He was my middle son's principal and I want to give him an acknowledgement and I'm sad to see him leave. He was excellent. He was a wonderful educator and leader. He cared

about our kids in Union and I'm very sad to see him go. I hope we take a look at our practices here in Union. Our kids definitely need people who care about them.

Bernice Buda stated both of my sons started out in Union and I had the same experience as a lot of parents that spoke as far as getting him into certain classes. We came from a district where he was in gifted and talented programs and he missed the deadline, he missed the test date that would have allowed him to get into those programs. Fast forward, I do support the policy. I don't think the Board should drag their feet because this is a time of action. Secondly, as a parent, I know have a preschooler in the district and when I am navigating through your website, it doesn't give me the information I need. I am all over the place looking for your reopening plan, what is the plan? The reopening plan is on the district website but it doesn't accurately reflect what is happening now. When are you going to plan to reopen? We have to make plans for our children.

Paul Casey stated I wanted to take a moment to recognize Mr. Harrell. He wasn't my son's principal but my son was in the academy program. I can't say that I come across an individual in the district that was as committed to our students as Mr. Harrell in the time that we have been in Union. The relationship that I was fortunate to witness on a trip that I chaperoned with the academy was remarkable between him and students. It wasn't a group of students, it wasn't one student, it was all students. It is very sad to see him go. He not serving as my son's principal identified a challenge that he was having and was able to directly help him when others in the district missed it. That is the kind of people we need in the district and to see and hear from Latee McCleod tonight and having Tommy leave and Mrs. Moses and Mr. Tatum and to prevent Dr. Morgan who did an amazing job tonight from even being considered to be in a leadership role in our district. They all have something in common that whether or not it is racially motivated or not is irrelevant, the appearance that has to our community is very upsetting. Perception means a lot to people and that's four that I'm counting of senior leadership people who have moved on and no longer here to support our children. While I think the conversation tonight was great and loved the way it came back to the children and focused on getting this policy passed and applaud Dr. Morgan and Mrs. Ruiz and everyone on that great conversation, I hope that is the very first step because this district has a lot of work to do on this issue. It was two years ago when I was involved in this conversation with the planning committee and it was pushed back that we weren't ready for that conversation. We have to have that conversation now. Thank you Dr. Morgan for doing that for this district; we applaud you and appreciate your efforts.

Alexandra Dougherty stated I am extremely disappointed in how you Mr. Tatum responded to Lilliana. I thought it was extremely unprofessional. From a principal perspective I do have to say that it seems as though Union did drop the ball with regard to getting our students back into the building. In part that can be blamed on the lack of communication from the Superintendent's office. I work for another district and our superintendent is communicating with both and family members on a weekly basis. I would encourage you now that you set December 1<sup>st</sup> as a tentative date to have more consistent communication with your families because we do have to plan on what we are doing with our children. Our children are suffering from having to engage in learning over virtual screens for five hours a day. I have three children who absolutely hate going on the computer and having to learn this way. They thrive learning in

their classroom. I would like you to consider more regular communication so that we know that plans are being made and that the plans are being met. I would also like for Union to consider and has it been considered to bring the elementary grades back first – starting with our youngest learners because those are the learners that have the most difficult time with the virtual learning; that and our special needs kids. Thank you.

Veronica Virberry stated I'm a little frustrated and concerned and confused about why we need another survey when a survey was sent out in August and roughly 50% of parents wanted their children back in the classroom in some capacity. I don't believe these opinions have changed strongly. We have never had the option to go back. I don't see the need for that. I wish we could consider the teachers and students who want to return to a brick and mortar building be allowed to do so. The teachers and students that want to remain virtual be allowed to do so. I think it is a win-win and you would have a reduced enrollment automatically and therefore the classroom capacity is already smaller. I would love for the Board to consider that. I would also like to think about looking at some of the curriculum we have. My daughter is a first grader and her go math book, she started on chapter 6 instead of chapter 1. What I see is children sobbing and crying and not being able to grasp the material because very often their parents are not with them – they either have to work at home or in a building and their children are being taken care of by grandparents or somebody that doesn't speak English very well. They don't know how to work for themselves. I wish the schools would back off on the concept of hitting these high standards when we have children that haven't been in a school classroom for seven months. There are a lot of emotional turmoil happening in households and it is very frustrating as the parents sit by and try my best. I value my child's education, my child's teachers, my child's school as a whole. Seeing that happen is very frustrating and I would love to see more breaks taken. I do agree with Ms. Dougherty that the school day is just too long on a computer. Pediatricians have been warning us for years about the detriment about screen time and children and saying max two hours a day and now we have them on five hours a day. Children getting migraines and having behavioral issues – these are real things that need to be considered. The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics concept of the risk versus benefits – the risk of COVID versus the benefits of in-person schooling – that is a very important consideration to look at when considering the reopening of schools. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

Mr. Benaquista stated that is why we are talking about and that is why our plan may look a little different when returning to hybrid and that is another reason why we need to do another survey to give the options to parents that chose virtual that may want to come back to hybrid. Now that Mr. Tatum has deemed our buildings safe by a third-party, has all the PPE equipment – the constant feedback that we are getting we also know that we can accommodate the students in person. Thank you. We did speak about that earlier in the meeting and I'm not sure if you were on and we talked about possibly changing our plan to accommodate the needs of the kids, specifically Mr. Tatum mentioned November 1<sup>st</sup> with our current remote learning to possibly give a little more break for RTI as well as social emotional learning. That is the feedback we have been getting from students and teachers and parents that the students do need a little more time in a different fashion to get more help or time away if they don't need the RTI so there will be a slight adjustment to the schedule coming up shortly – to the virtual setting as well as we roll out the hybrid plan – we will deliver it to the community, the Board, the teachers, the students



and this way we can get accurate numbers based on the Phase One return – who wants virtual and who wants hybrid. Thank you.

Mrs. Richardson stated I know the public doesn't know what goes on behind the scenes with our Superintendent and his two Assistant Superintendents who have worked very very hard since COVID-19 came into effect and they were smacked with it in one day and had to readjust the entire school district and the learning process for all the students in the Union School District. I think Mr. Tatum has done a terrific job in ensuring that our children continue to receive a good education and his Assistant Superintendents Gerry Benaquista and Annie Moses were right there with him from March and working very hard to accomplish what they needed to do for our students and make sure this school district kept their students safe. I'm reading in the paper that different school districts have gone back and they have had a lot of positive cases of COVID-19. I think being on the side of being more careful so that we don't have a pandemic in our school district is probably the primary reason to cautiously proceed in bringing children back to school. I think the special needs children should come first before any other group because they are feeling it the most but it all has to be done in a very cautious and safe way. Our schools are all not new so there are many things that had to be addressed and reviewed and the schools all had to be accommodated so that when we do reopen, we reopen so our students are safe, the teachers are safe and we have a lot of teachers that may have compromising conditions and do not want to come back to school and then you have to hire substitute teachers and that is an additional cost to the district. I don't know if we are prepared for that with the budget that we prepared before COVID-19. I just want to commend them for what they have done and I also want to commend the supervisors, the directors and the teachers who went to classes during the summer for virtual learning so that they could be prepared to provide an education for our students in Union Township. I think they have all done a terrific job and I can't just sit here and listen to things being said that nothing is being done because it is being done and you don't know it because you are not there every day. As Board members we our privy to more information than you are and we do get an updated report very frequently. Thank you and I hope that you can be patient with what the district does moving forward under the direction of our Superintendent Tatum and Assistant Superintendents Benaquista and Moses.

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you Mrs. Richardson.

Mr. Nufrio read the following statement:

Thank you in advance for your kind indulgence and attention so that I may respond to Dr. Francis' comment following my personal statement that I read at last week's work session meeting, and in response to former Board member Jeff Monje's comment in the public portion of last week's Work session meeting, which was one of many in past meetings, including those incorrectly stated by former Board member Nellis Regis-Darby, repeatedly commenting on Pending ethics allegations in attempts to discredit, undermine, and subvert my assigned and appointed duties on this Board to which I was duly elected three times.

For Dr. Francis to say that I somehow infringed on his and everyone's time by my "historical accounting" of past errors, omissions and falsehoods, not



to mention the numerous lies and libelous statements by my three accusers, he and two past Board members, is just another example of intentional disregard of rules of ethics and professional conduct by a fellow Board Member.

My right to speak, after enduring 3 years of relentless attempts to malign me, and, to finally address the attacks and inflammatory comments, is clearly defined and protected, just as his would be. His comment of the three minute rule in Policy #9322 applies to comments by the public, so as to minimize the often, repetitive grandstanding, bully-pulpit display and hapless personal and, at times, politically motivated pontifications that the very same, and, other few individuals exhibit, seeking only to disrupt, discredit, or, oftentimes, impugn staff, Board members or, Board issues that may not always be relevant, or, in fact could be otherwise addressed through other venues, other than at scheduled Board mtgs. Incidentally, Policy #9322 clearly addresses these in Sections B and E.

Nevertheless, it is also his right to speak, but, it is Not his right to deny me mine nor to impugn it. It's just another example of the defense mechanism erupting when faced with the truth and the accompanying embarrassment of a meaningless apology which was offered.

Ironically, during the first two terms of my tenure, I was professionally regarded as a mentor and advisor to them, until I was perceived as the opposition to their well-veiled, personal and political agendas and goals. For Nine plus years of selfless service, I provided, without reservation or hidden agendas, only the sincerest concerns for our children and for our school district, always unwavering in my positions on Transparency and Due Process within the prescribed and permitted limits of the statutes that govern us all.

As a lifelong professional educator, I now would like to take this opportunity to read a short list of well-known, familiar lines and sayings that may be reflective, analogous or symbolic of some of what I've stated with the hope that it will reach the hearts and minds of the intended recipients as well as anyone else who is and may be receptive to the direct or implied messages: First-- From Shakespeare's Hamlet, "The lady doth protest too much", spoken by Queen Gertrude while observing the play within the play that mirrored her guilt-ridden actions. Second--Abraham Lincoln boldly stated," Better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt." Third--Mark Twain, one of America's favorite writers and casual philosophers followed with, "Never argue with a fool - onlookers may not be able to tell the difference." Fourth--This is a concept that is often embraced by attorneys, psychologist and many other individuals, "When a person is caught in a lie, it's usually an indication that it may not be the first NOR the only one told." Fifth--A famous British author named Chaucer wrote in his Canterbury Tales, "Familiarity Breeds Contempt." My interpretation of this is that the more acquainted one becomes with a person or a group, the discovery is often alarming -- as the Façade is lifted. Hence, the

contempt for the discoverer begins. Sixth--My own personal precept which I've strived to live by is: The Life that We Live is the Legacy that we will leave. Seventh--President Abraham Lincoln stated it more eloquently by saying, "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count, It's the Life in your years.

The lesson derived from all this is that only through self-reflection and willingness to admit errors, omissions and imperfections within our lives, that we may be able to improve and establish our personal and collective legacies. It is never too late to take corrective actions to achieve improvement. That should be the role model and mantra that we should all adopt and demonstrate for our children. After all, isn't that what it's all about?

My last comment, if you please. Some very disturbing, libelous rumors and absolute lies have been spoken and spread by former Board members and private residents regarding me and a well-known, veteran Public Official, whose skin is a lot tougher than mine, that were just very recently brought to my attention from very worthy and reliable sources. Therefore, let it be known that my personal attorney has been fully apprised and he has begun a proper investigation for legal proceedings to follow.

When completed, those individuals responsible for the intentional lies that constitute libel and defamation of character will be brought to bear the full brunt of the consequences which the law prescribes and the court will exact.

Thank you again for your time and attention."

Dr. Francis stated can I have a few seconds to respond? Mrs. Minneci stated we are not going to go into an argument are we? Dr. Francis stated let me leave it alone. Mrs. Minneci stated thank you.

Mrs. Minneci asked are we going into executive session. Mr. Benaquista stated unless Mr. Taylor has anything, the matter that everyone received rice notices on the matter doesn't need to be spoken about in executive session. Mr. Taylor stated I have an update. I received an email from the insurance company so I need to update the non-conflicted Board members with continuation of our discussion from last month in the ethics matter complaint filed against Board members Ruiz, Francis, McDowell and Morgan. Mrs. Minneci asked if there was anything else. Mr. Taylor stated I will give you an update on a pending litigation – in a matter of Corey Lowery. An update to the full Board on that matter and then the non-conflicted members on the other matter.

#### MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mr. Nufrio, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, that the Board go into Executive Session at 11:17 p.m. to discuss the following subject matters without the presence of the public in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b: ethics complaint filed against Board members Ruiz, Francis, McDowell and Morgan, pending litigation matters – Lowery, matters falling under attorney-client privilege.

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

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 12:03 a.m. (Wednesday, October 21, 2020).

Mr. McDowell returned to meeting at 12:03 a.m.

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you everyone for attending our meeting tonight. We appreciate all your comments and patience.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mr. Nufrio, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the meeting be adjourned at 12:03 a.m. (Wednesday, October 21, 2020).

AYE: Mr. McDowell, Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

DIANE CAPPIELLO  
ACTING BOARD SECRETARY

