

**TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
PLANNING SESSION MINUTES
AUGUST 22, 2019**

NOTICE OF MEETING:

The planning meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Thursday, August 22, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey pursuant to the notice sent to each member.

Mrs. Minneci called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Mrs. Linda Richardson, Mrs. Kim Ruiz

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Sherry Higgins, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Mr. Gregory Tatum, Mrs. Moses, Mrs. Kim Conti, Mrs. Ann Hart, Mrs. Maureen Guilfoyle, Mrs. Sandra Paul

ALSO PRESENT:

Philosophy Committee

Mrs. Ruiz led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. McDowell 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.

Mr. Tatum stated a brief overview of who we are going to see tonight and what it is all about. You see on the agenda “presentation by the philosophy committee” – the philosophy committee is a subcommittee of the districtwide planning committee; a committee which has been in function for 2-3 years. One of things that we talked about in one of our goals about two years ago was to take a look at the district and look at it in a standpoint of doing some type of district reorganization. One might ask why would you want to reorganize the district and there are a couple of reasons why you would want to do that. One has to do with what is going on in the community right now with all the building and the way in which the district is configured, one of the questions we raise is whether we maximize the student achievement because of the transitions that take place throughout the school district.

In the presentation you are going to see, most of what we worked on in this committee is research based. It takes a look at the needs of grade 6 where we find many students at that age

level have a great deal of needs, challenges and that is one of the levels that we would like to target. We find a link between students that are in grade 6 and grade 9 and the dropout rate. All those things are interconnected. We also know when we talk about student transitions, that there are a lot of disadvantages that go along with students moving from one building to another. We will talk a little about what it means to formulate a school attachment and also how it effects student behavior, social/emotional needs of children and also the continuity of teaching and learning.

Under discussion items we will talk a little tonight and it will require input from our Board members and our administration about goal settings for the end of the 19-20 school year. There are a number of issues that are on the minds of individuals and I think this would be a good time to talk about what our goals are and where we are going moving forward. In formulating those goals what I normally do is I will develop an action plan and benchmark particular activities that will take place during the course of the school year and then at the February session, it will be where we are at that stage of the game.

You will also see on the agenda what goals made derived from grade-level configuration. We will talk about the demographics of the Town and how it impacts on the configuration of our schools. We will take a look at our budget planning for 20-21 and the timeline. Also educational goals and what grant opportunities may be afforded to us to help out the budget planning process. So that is the overview of what is going to happen tonight.

At this time I will ask Ms. Hall to come up and introduce the committee.

Jill Hall stated I have here tonight Mrs. Petricco from Connecticut Farms and Mrs. Ferrise who are also members of the philosophy committee, along with Ms. Bridges who is not here with us tonight.

I would like to take a minute to expand on what Mr. Tatum rolled out for. First, this committee has been five years. A variety of conversations came up throughout this committee. The full committee consists of stakeholders from the community, administrators, members of the PTA, family members. When we have the full committee here the room is very full and then we have different subcommittees working on different things.

The conversation, no matter which committee was working, kept coming back to the same thing which was “are we in the best position to meet the needs of our students?” The data was very supportive. It says we are doing a lot of things really well. There are some other things that require a little bit of our attention. With that movement towards social/emotional learning and that recognition that it is not just about test scores and we have to look at the total student development, we looked at that and that sixth grade piece kept jumping out at us and that connection between grades 6 and 9 and then graduation rates and so forth.

We broke out into this committee to look at how can we continue to do well on what we do well and how can we improve in the areas that we didn't. It is tied very much to our brick and mortar and the need for the buildings to be upgraded and brought into the 21st century. If we are going to make those changes and we have to make those changes, how can we get to a space

where we can do the STEM work that we want to do in that 21st century learning models that we really need to get on board with. That drove some of the conversations and we dove into the research and we started to look at all kinds of different models.

Where we are right now – is the same configuration since 1969. I was living in Union at that time – I missed Central 6; I went from Connecticut Farms to Burnet. That was a huge change and other than going from a junior high to a middle school and Central 6 to Central 5 – we really haven't changed much since 1969 and that was the desegregation plan and it was a national model at the time. 1969 was 50 years ago and things have changed.

The center of Town has changed, we built new schools, we have the train station, Kean University is expanding and things are different from what they were in 1969.

In doing the research we came up with a lot of things. One of the things that jumped out and we looked at the K-8 model, pre-k, 1-2 model, we looked at different things, was in those years where there is a transition, school attachment gets disrupted and it is very difficult for students. They are ending one thing and starting something else.

Keeping that in mind we have a transition at the end of 4th grade, transition at the end of 5th grade and then a transition into high school – it seemed more disruptive. We know that continuity is very important. Kids become very loyal to their elementary school.

When students in middle grades stay in an elementary setting there are fewer discipline problems and that spoke more to the K-8 model. But even if you put the 6th graders back into the elementary school, the data will tell us that discipline drops because the 6th graders are no longer the younger ones in the building. They become leaders in their buildings and with that leadership role become responsibility and the opportunity for them to step up so that was pretty compelling.

There is more discipline problems with a 6th grader goes into a middle school setting. What we also know, whether which child psychology model you look at, from a social/emotional standpoint, the social/emotional learning condition, our configuration does not align with what is the best interest of kids from an emotional development position.

What are we proposing? We looked at all this and including the building that is going on in Town and it tends to be focused on one side of Town. We didn't want that to be the reason to do it, but we needed to include that in the discussion and we have an uptick in population.

A pre-k to 6 configuration in which Kawameeh and Jefferson would both become a pre-k to 6th grade school. Essentially every neighborhood would have a neighborhood school. Burnet would have all the 7th and 8th graders. What we are saying as this proposal goes into play, our kids come together in 7th grade and stay together from 7th through 12th. So when you talk about that continuity piece, that is key.

UHS would be 9-12 and we would propose a freshman academy to ease that transition from the middle school into the high school which we also know is a little bit of a bump.

Freshman year brings with it a lot of issues. A freshman academy in the truest sense of really working on specific high school skills – academic and social/emotional – to ease that movement from middle school to high school.

Up to grade 4 – students would have one teacher. In grade 5, just like they have in Jefferson now, they would have two teachers and in 6th grade and up, even though the 6th graders would still be housed in the elementary schools, we would still want subject specific teachers for them. It is that movement towards getting ready for middle school while keeping them in an elementary setting. This will not be without challenges.

What does this accomplish? It increases and approves our ability to deal with the individual, academic, personal, career readiness, whatever skill you are discussing – puts us in a better position to handle that. It creates more space and alleviates the crowding. We have some studies on how the numbers will play out. We really do have the room to do this and with some breathing room.

As we update our schools, we will be able to better meet the needs of our kids in the 21st century. I think we all know one way or the other, we have to upgrade these schools. If we are going to upgrade them, why not upgrade them in a way that also addresses all of these other things that we identified with.

Challenges – I want you to know that we didn't go into this without thinking about the downside because there is a downside to this. Zoning is going to be difficult. We would have to rezone. Some kids would get shifted so even though in the beginning we are talking about fewer transitions; in the first few years there would be more transitions for some of our students. For an example, a student at Washington might get rezoned and now have to go to Kawameeh. We need to get the schools up to code for pre-k and the State is very specific about what is required for a pre-k classroom. Creating STEM labs, we are going to need that science in all of the elementary schools and we really need to do some work at Burnet to get that in an appropriate science/technology/engineering/math situation for the middle school configuration.

The starting times may be changing; we may need to shift that in order to make sure we are not creating any issues there. There would be a few more transitions in the beginning before we got everybody in the space. Very similar to when we were creating Jefferson and kids had to go to Hannah for one year; Connecticut Farms there was a lot of shifting. There was a disruption but kids are remarkably resilient.

We need to write some grants to offset the cost of some of this. We really want to be creative on how we try to finance this if we get your approval. Obviously, if we get the nod to move on to the next phase – if that is where you are leaning and agree.

Staffing – teachers and administrators – this is critical; certification, making sure that the appropriate certificated teachers are teaching those classes in the elementary setting, moving some people from the middle school into an elementary school. It will require a lot of professional development in order for teachers to be prepared for those changes.

We need to get the community to embrace change. Change can be challenging. We need to move from that but that is always how we have done it – it is a mindset. If you understood a little bit better, you can recognize the value in it. With looking at that initial phase where it is going to cost, it is going to change, a kid might get moved, we know there is going to be some growing pains that comes along with it. We need to get the stakeholders on board, the Board of Ed on board, we need to get some surveys out there. There are community stakeholders, the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, local agencies that we will need the support of. We need to have community meetings.

We have to create a 5-year plan. We have to figure out what we need immediately to open in that first year which we are looking at 20-21 and then what will we need in the next four years after that. We need a 5-year plan; then talking about potentially moving to a standard base assessment in the elementary school. We felt if we are rolling out the changes let's roll them all out.

Ensuring professional development – there will be a lot of support needed by teachers and staff if these kinds of changes are going to take place.

We have to determine the overall cost of this in a real sense of what this is going to cost. We can't even give you a ballpark figure at this point. We can tell you that we explored a lot of ways to bring some money in and thinking creatively but until we get "let's go to the next phase" we really haven't looked at those numbers yet.

We might have to ask for a cap waiver or a bond referendum – we may have to go to the community and say we think this is in the best interest of your kids but we are going to be picking your pocket a little bit and we are going to dig into your wallet a little bit for us – we are not sure. It depends on how economically we can do this but we want to do it the right way as well.

We hope that there are some other projects going on that may offset some of the costs. We have been at meetings where you talked about solar panels, LED lighting and the long-term cost savings to the district and perhaps some of that might offset some of the costs. Again we are trying to think outside the box because we feel the more research we have done on this the more enthusiastic we have become on all the reasons why we should be doing this.

That pushed us into this thinking about all of these other things. We know we should be doing this; how are we going to make it happen.

How will we know if this works if we do this? We have taken a little bit from the play book of Hillside that just kept jumping around from configuration to configuration and we really don't want to do that. We want to have it really thought out and we want to get enough data and when we do this we would include in our data all of these components – psycho-social development, test scores, levels of kids reporting anxiety and depression, discipline referrals – are they actually going down; do kids feel more attached to their school and more school loyalty and looking at collaborations within the community.

We are going to need the Township help on this. This will have to get everybody involved if this is going to happen.

We want to get some other data to focus groups and we want to include the students in these conversations. Their voices are very important. We as adults always think we know best but sometimes we get our best information from the students and we ask them what they think. They are included in that stakeholder piece.

We start talking about these things and all this other stuff comes up. What are we going to do with Hamilton School? If we are going to do all these sweeping things and commit to all of this, can we create a satellite program that maybe includes Lincoln Tech and Kean? Can we get some of our students on those campuses – why not? Lincoln Tech has always come forward. We had a great meeting with them about some of the opportunities they may have available for our students. Infusing the social/emotional learning across the curriculum; not making it just be something that you would talk to your counselor, an assembly but really pushing that in through all subjects from pre-k to 12.

Creating opportunities to bring the elementary kids together – we don't want them to be completely separate until they get to middle school. We want to bring the community together like color runs, multicultural fair and service learning projects that would put all of the elementary kids together working on a similar project.

Parent advisory – expanding a parent advisory because we do have a parent advisory but we need to get that expanded and include more people in it.

Presentation of district reconfiguration proposal appended to minutes.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I heard most of this in our education committee – you know I am in full support. The first question that jumped out at me is when you were discussing challenges – we just had this whole big issue on busing policy. I still have parents complaining because due to the changes now they don't have busing so how will this reconfiguration impact busing because now you are going to have K-6 at Jefferson which means a lot more children who will need to be bused. Mr. Tatum stated right now you don't have a neighborhood school. You will have less students leaving the Vauxhall area. Ms. Hall stated the only children being bused to Jefferson would be the students that have to cross Route 78. Everybody else who lives in the Jefferson community would not need to be bused.

You would have busing from the Kean University area to Burnet and from Kean to the high school and the local kids on the opposite of 78. Mrs. Ruiz stated so it actually lowers the amount of students that are going to be bused.

Chasity Santana stated in reference to special education was that taken into account? With our special education, we have sensory rooms for each school. Would we be having that? Ms. Hall stated we would be looking to limit the number of kids that would have to go to a school other than their neighborhood school; that is a conversation that is going to involve based

on the number of kids in each building. In a perfect world everyone would get their neighborhood school but we can't say that with great certainty but that is a goal.

Mr. Tatum stated the programs are program orientated and is based upon where the program is being offered. There will still be some busing from different parts of Town but it depends on how specialized that particular program may happen to be. If we talk about a general resource room, that is something that will be housed in most of the buildings. A sensory room where there is a need to have a particular program and if we only have 1-2 of them across the district they may be designated in a particular building then they would have to be transported.

Kathleen Brunsmeyer stated as a parent and an employee, our most crowded elementary schools – there isn't a place at Washington School to take my friend who needed that break. I would have to borrow the counselor's office. This would so help that it will shift the Town around and put those students at a lesser number at that school and it will offer so much more.

Suehay Monge stated there was a slide about standard base assessment. Mrs. Ferrise stated we are talking about what is an A or a 95 mean for a 1st-3rd grader. When you look at research there is a lot that shows that going into a standard base – we know what students need to do; it is not about whether they are doing it with a 90 or a 70 – it is really about are they meeting the expectations; are they going above the expectations; are they approaching expectations and it makes for a much richer conversation about where the child is and what we need to do to bring that child to the level point. When you go to a standard base assessment piece, you are looking for overall. How the child is doing as they progress through. The common theme is to go to trimesters rather than quarters. If you think about the first quarter, for early elementary children they are coming into that classroom, it is a world wind and then by November you need to assign a grade. Whether we like it or not, parents put a lot more meaning into that grade. It takes away the sigma of the grades and the negativity piece and it focuses on the positive of what the children can do and then we move the child where they need to be. What level of support does the child need? Does the child meet the expectations with teacher support? Do they need extra additional support? It shifts the conversation to helping the child grow. It is a formative process. Children develop at such different rates. It is hard to put a number to them.

Mrs. Monge asked will it actually reduce the number of students in the building if we are increasing the grades that are going to be there? Mr. Tatum stated we had a demographic study about a year or so ago. One thing I asked them to do for us is to develop a capacity study. Capacity study was really designed to take a look at all the programs that we currently have in the district and to look at how many students we would be able to house in these buildings. We took a look at all those numbers and try to determine if we had two pre-k classes in every building – I looked at the total number that they said we could have in the building. Many years ago we could put 700 kids in Franklin School but the reality is you are not going to put that many students in there now when you have programs that house small numbers of students. We probably could house on average 600 students in every school. Right now with the current enrollment at the elementary level – we would be at about 525 for every building. We would be comfortable with room to grow. I project that if this configuration were to go forward and looking at how things are now with the existing programs, we probably could house 2,000 students districtwide.

Your middle schools would house a population that is greater than the elementary but keeping 6th grade at the elementary level and then instead of moving children in two different directions and then bring them together in the 9th grade – you will be able to maintain a nice level in each of the schools. You also have to take into consideration the fact that when you house students at the high school level, you are going to see a reduction in academic failure in 6th grade – there is a concept called the 9th grade bulge. The 9th grade bulge is a concept that speaks about the failure rate of 9th graders because there is so much failure in 9th grade that you have more kids coming into 9th grade and you have the kids that failed in 9th grade. So the idea of having an academy and more success will also help the overcrowding piece in grade 9. There are a lot of pieces that go along with this. When we looked at this there would be more space.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I actually like the idea of moving towards standard base because the common core was talked about in 2010 and we are now in 2019 and we move from the common core to the next generation of learning standards. We should have already implemented standard base so we are late in the game for that one so let's just make that clear.

My question goes to the data – your presentation spoke about the data and the research. Is that information available to us? Where is your source of your data? Ms. Hall stated I have a lot of it with me and I will be happy to share that. It came from a variety of different sources. Not all of it is agreeing with this particular configuration. One of the things that we took a great amount of time on was not just what is out there but looking at what is best for us. That was really important for us. You can say pre-k to 8, pre-k to 3, 4-6 – there is a lot of information out there but we took that data and we looked at what our data was telling us specific to Union.

Mr. Tatum stated there is actually a State model right now – pre-k to 3, 4 through 8 and 9 through 12 – is what the State of New Jersey suggests. What we talked about here was trying to come up with something that would be unique to this district and the needs. One of the most important things you need to think about is when children come together for the first time – I can sell central six concept right now knowing what I know about six grade a lot better than when it was done years ago for desegregation purposes and I went through a couple of desegregation in Hillside as a teacher and administrator and they're still trying to do this thing the right way. The most important thing is to make it unique to the needs of the district and also the input from the stakeholders. We sit in this room and conceptually it sounds good, minds of other people may say we are off our rocker for even undertaking this. But if you look at what the research really says and how it speaks to these needs – 6th graders again – social/emotionally needs are up there. We haven't figured any of that on how our schools are configured. I'm from Roselle, I remember when they went through the same configuration and it was never about the needs of the children, it was always about compliance reasons. I was with the County Business Administration 1-2 years ago and we were talking about this and she said to me you don't need that desegregation anymore because your demographics will have a breakdown. Some of the things we talk about we lived through Jefferson. But at the end of the day it is about the needs of the children. As we discuss this more and more I think financially, socially – it is going to be better for children and definitely academically.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated in terms of Jefferson – Jefferson will be turned into a pre-k to 6 and it will house students but what is the zoning line right now. Ms. Hall stated we are looking at Liberty Avenue area as well as the Vauxhall area. We looked at those numbers and it is a very diverse group. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated that was where I was aiming. We don't want to have a building more or less of one than the other. You want to make sure your demographics in a particular building is completely balanced. Not only equity but in terms of equality within those buildings so make sure we have those two things balanced together.

Mr. Tatum stated the last time we met we had Mrs. Hart in and we had the demographics and we took a look at some of those areas and we got the feedback when we did this presentation before the planning committee and the same issue arose about the demographics and make sure they are fair. We also considered equity in the teaching staff. We will be looking very carefully at selecting staff to ensure that we are providing. We don't want a stepchild in the district; that is not what we are looking to do. We are looking to have equity for everybody. The community and the school district will become better in the long run if we start to look at some of the things.

Ms. Hall stated we hope to create a situation where nobody every says that one of the elementary schools is preferred over any other one.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated this is a big undertaking. I am in favor of this reconfiguration and I think it is a really good idea. My question is a plan without money is no plan at all. Have we started some preliminary crunching of numbers? Ms. Hall stated we wanted to wait until we put this in front of the Board. We did not want to presume that it would be o.k. to move and talk to anybody else about this until the Board was made aware of what the plan was. When we look at the timeline, the next step is a meeting that Mr. Tatum is going to have with regards to what exactly the dollars and cents are going to cost us.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated as a Board member, in order for me to move forward, I want to know the preliminary numbers. I am going to say yes to this but I'm blind on how much this is going to cost. Mr. Tatum stated it is a concept right now. It is something on paper. We know it can't come to a realistic outcome unless there is some preliminary information that we put out there. This is at the foundation level right now. We have some data when we had the five-year facility plan. Remember that is based on the current configuration in the district. We have to come back to the table but the idea is it is a concept. The many things we have done in the district it was a concept on paper and now you see it as reality. The summer bridge program evolved that way. I went over there the other day and I was amazed and that was of little cost but we have been able to maintain over the last couple of years.

This is something I would love to see become reality because the reconfiguration would be better for everyone. No one knows better than I do how people do this Burnet vs Kawameeh. We have two great schools there but when these kids separate and leave one another and come back together, they come back with two different educations, philosophies, administrative styles – there is a lot that goes along with that. When you bring this level of continuity to the forefront I think you are going to see that what we intend on doing with grade 6th – at the end of grade six we will have interaction activities – and then on top of that moving up exercise with the whole sixth grade so they come together. We they move in the middle school, they will move as one

grade level. When they come together they stay together at high school. We don't know the money piece right now but what we are looking for tonight – you as a Board want to endorse because if you say no, then there is no reason to continue this hard. Mrs. Minneci stated there is no sense in you going to the next step to do all that work without us saying that is a great idea. I think we have to give them an opportunity to go the next step.

Ann Margaret Shannon stated I'm agreeing with Lincoln Tech and Kean but please add Union County Community College. Ms. Hall stated that is just an oversight. Ms. Shannon stated did anyone invite the Township Committee tonight? Mr. Tatum stated that will be another presentation. We had discussed with the Mayor, she wants us to come to the Township before we came to the Board so we said we would do this first. Ms. Shannon stated as far as the money goes and I know you are not going to believe I'm going to say this – could you please find money for a full-time grant writer. I'm sorry Maureen I totally forgot. I think of you as just Title. The thing I was talking about Manny was handling – is that something Mrs. Guilfoyle will handle in the future? Mr. Tatum stated she has a lot on her plate right now.

Mr. McDowell stated it would seem that the capacity at Burnet – it would seem that the number of students would increase. Mr. Tatum stated you will be taking the 6th grade out. Mr. McDowell stated but you will be getting 7th and 8th grades from Kawameeh coming in. If there are 700 students at Kawameeh and 1,000 at Burnet? Mr. Tatum stated the capacity at Burnet is 1,364. We projected it would be about 1,200. A little less than the capacity right now.

Mr. McDowell asked do you think we might need additional teachers or go with what we have? Mr. Tatum stated right now we have adequate teaching staff. If there are more specialized programs that we bring, that may be where additional staff may be needed. Right now for core we have enough. It is a matter of us trying to develop programs where everyone is going to come together.

Mr. McDowell stated about the pre-k and the requirements for those schools – I guess that will cost additional moneys to get those schools up to the standards for pre-k. I know Jefferson is. What about the other elementary schools? Mr. Tatum stated there is work to be done. Some have the rooms already set up.

Mrs. Ferrise stated we talked a great deal about the staffing and the benefits of one middle school. You want to be able to offer students choices. Splitting students between two buildings, you would need more teachers. We talked about if you bring everybody to one, it allows you an opportunity to create a lot more electives and give students that choice and you are not being forced to take this elective.

Mr. McDowell stated since we may end up busing more students to Burnet. Mr. Tatum stated that would be a level of busing but that would be the 7th and 8th graders.

Mrs. Ruiz stated my suggestion would be that the next step should be that the committee come back with another presentation about funding – how much is it going to cost? What is the demographic breakdown – what are these schools going to look like? I think it is important to us but to parents as well. How will this reconfiguration impact Title I funding for the schools? The

students are going to be reconfigured entirely particularly at Jefferson and even at Burnet because we will have 7th and 8th grade. Will it cause us to lose Title I funding or open more doors to obtain more funding? Mr. Tatum stated that is a good question but the demographics of the Town – the population and the economic factors are what drives the Title I. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated free and reduced lunch – the percentage in each of the schools will change but you are still going to get funding for the total amount of free and reduced lunch but it will be distributed differently because you take the top four that are the highest percentage. Jefferson will no longer be a Title I school, Hannah Caldwell will be shifted to that spot. I think the high school will always be a Title I school and Burnet would also. It's the high school, the middle school and two elementary schools. It wouldn't change the funding amount.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked how does that affect homebuyers too when you change the Title I positions and locations? That effects peoples home buying abilities.

Ms. Shannon stated did you say no matter what the distribution, only four schools will have the Title I. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated it goes by the ranking. We rank them by percentages. It is always split between four schools. Ms. Shannon asked can you have five schools? Mrs. Guilfoyle stated if you wanted to you could.

Sienna Boku stated honors start in 7th grade now – now you are going to have kids that might be honors transitioning completely from 6th to 7th grade so the first time they are having an honors class in 7th grade, in a new building. Ms. Hall stated it is accelerated in 6th grade. Mr. Tatum stated we are building on a middle school concept. They will be doing it in a smaller settings. We are trying to keep the same type of continuity in terms of subject matter. When you move to 7th grade for the first time everybody will be getting the same specialized program across the board right through 8th grade into the high school.

Sienna Boku stated in honors there is a lot of pressure and going into a new building with a bunch of people that you don't know and that could be really difficult. A lot of times people at the top tier are overlooked when it comes to social/emotional needs as well as their academic performance. Ms. Hall stated one of the things that we really wanted to look at and after spending 30 years in the middle school is going to be the best part of all of this is being able to focus on that middle school transition, adolescent development, psycho/social development, specific to that age group because if we are going to do this right, we have to really take a hard look at curriculum and everything very specific to that age group. I started to get excited because bringing my background of so many years in the middle school, I know there is a tremendous need for that support across the board. By nature of the fact that they are in 7th and 8th grade, they are at risk. We know this and we can address it.

Mr. Monge stated as it pertains to the diversity we have. The last meeting I did attend, I'm the one who brought up as it pertains to Jefferson and Vauxhall. There are two highly distressed census tracks in Union and that is the Vauxhall community and Mills Run neighborhood. The concern I had was you can't have folks in a low economic distressed community all together in one school. I think that will be an issue. If you speak to that, every school is still going to have this uniqueness and programmatically you may have a mentorship program that is more needed in one school versus the other school. Maybe that is something you

can think about. When you create these reconfigurations, when you talk about home value, you are still going to have the home values higher in the Washington area – that is what it is today and will continue that way so that will create its own dynamics. There are going to be some schools that are going to be preferred because it is where the higher values are.

On the core side, we do have this five year plan and a lot of that stuff is roofs and you have to do it anyway. I think that is relatively easy to pull out. The other things is the fit of the space – furniture, equipment, reconfiguration of the space. Making Jefferson as an elementary – obviously that is a flash reconfiguration like bathrooms. It is expensive. Mr. Tatum stated they are already there. Kawameeh is the one.

Mr. Monge stated we talked about population. Whether it is Kean, Lincoln Tech, UCC – some schools have seniors go on college campuses that absolutely reduces the population in the high school.

Accountability, measuring success – right now we measure success by whatever report comes out – it would be great if we had some measure of how we consider success and saying this is part of it. The buy-in, like why should we spend all this money, this is what we think is going to come out of it and guess what, these are our goals. This is what we are going to report back to you taxpayers of what we are talking about doing. We have a five year plan, but we really never done what we should be doing. If we are going to talk about accountability and what we are doing today, we don't have a great track record of that. If we are going to do this I think you have to cross t's and dot i's because you will have to do a bond and you are going to have to go out to the taxpayers and ask for money. You are going to have to go to our State Senators and others and say you have to help us out. The Township – are you going to continue building, this is an issue. We are preparing for increases but the Town doesn't seem like that is going to happen even though it is happening, there has to be a meeting of the minds.

Mr. Casey stated the timeline – is it starting 20-21? Ms. Hall stated in a perfect world September 2021. Mr. Tatum stated we originally talked about trying to make this happen in September but we need at least a year out in planning and discussions and finding the funding sources. We got a lot of feedback at the last meeting. But at the end of the day, something has to be done in this district. One of the reasons why I think we are where we are is because we have done nothing over the last 40 years. The population has changed, the needs of children have changed, the family needs have changed, there are a lot of things that have changed but we haven't. Having worked in a K-8 school and transitioning to a 5-6 school and then to a middle school as a teacher and administrator, you can see the difference moving from one environment to another and you can see the impact it has on the students' achievement depending on what type of environment that you are in. You can see the level of discipline depending on the environment you are in. You can research and look at it from a realistic standpoint. You can look at the numbers and you can see what the research says coincides with what you see on a day-to-day basis. Another piece that has to be discussed, when students come in from the 4th grade and transition into Jefferson, they come into an environment where they are doing a slight movement. When they go to sixth grade, it is like being in high school and they are not emotionally ready for that. The middle school concept was designed to prepare students for high school. We have forgotten developmentally where children are at that particular age level. They

are not ready to do all those things. Why do you think children fear going to middle school so much because they are afraid of all the things they have to do that they hadn't had to do in prior years. We look at stuff that is discipline but it is the nature of the age and that is something that we have to start addressing.

Ms. Hall stated when Mr. Tatum refers to discipline, what we are talking about are those behaviors that are prompted by the distress that those kids are going through and they act out. They don't get labeled but it is a discipline issue and let's clarify that – it is a distressed issue; it is an emotional concern and that behavior is a reaction to something else. Mr. Tatum stated they are going through stages of life.

Sienna Boku stated clubs in middle schools start at 6th grade – is there enough space at Burnet to house all of the sports or would you have to bring people back to Kawameeh. Will that impact clubs that could be run for 6th graders? Ms. Hall stated we would have to take a look and scale some of those stuff back and determine which teachers have a talent and a skill to run a club in the elementary schools. As far as the middle schools go we are solving that problem – the two different teams. With regards to practices male/female there are two soccer teams, there may well have to be sports. Sienna Boku stated busing – the softball team plays at Kawameeh now so will that space be taken away from a club that may be beneficial to a 6th grader. Mrs. Santana stated 6th graders don't do sports. Sienna Boku stated you would have to do specifics for that age demographic and now you are taking space away from that building. Ms. Hall stated a lot of the times the athletics stuff doesn't necessarily interfere with the club stuff. When you talk about teachers, if there is anything that we are good with is thinking creatively and figuring that stuff out and we will have to pay some attention to it, I think it is manageable. Mr. Tatum stated you do have to take a look at what is feasible too – age level and space. You want to develop a program that is conducive to that age level and needs. There is a huge amount of space outside for sports. All those things will be taken into consideration.

Mrs. Santana stated I also think it will take back that Burnet/Kawameeh thing. My son did skiing in Kawameeh and I said what about your Burnet friends – you'll see them and then I found out Burnet does not have skiing – so now we will have everything and take away that Burnet/Kawameeh because it should be one. Mr. Tatum stated it will be about choice then. I can't tell you how many calls I get about why is this offered in one school and not the other.

Rich D'Avanzo stated the last time in negotiations we put all the middle school clubs together. Mr. Tatum stated we did. Mr. D'Avanzo stated so every school has the same clubs – so they did have the ski club at Burnet – where they went I don't know. Mr. Tatum stated the opportunity is there but sometimes the interest is not there. If there is no interest we won't put anybody in there. That was one of the problems. Mr. D'Avanzo stated there were clubs at Kawameeh and they weren't at Burnet so when we got together and saw the list and there was a big discrepancy between the schools so we conformed that all into one so opportunity would be there for both Burnet and Kawameeh.

Mr. McDowell stated it was nice having the public and teachers involved in this discussion and not just one sided and answering questions.

Mrs. Monge stated this is being presented for consideration to the Board and are they going to be voting to allow the next step on researching on funding. Ms. Hall stated what we were asking for is a consensus to move forward. Mrs. Minneci asked is it worth it to them to continue on? Mrs. Monge stated there are Board members missing. Mrs. Minneci stated we have a quorum. Mrs. Ruiz stated if we are going to move forward I think the vibe I'm getting is that everyone wants to see that data so that is why I suggested that the next step the presentation should include cost for this project, demographics per school. We talked about what the demographics might look like at Jefferson but there are other schools that will change. The demographics are going to look different in other schools. I'm curious to see every school demographics. I chose Union because Union is diverse. My children are bi-racial and it was important for me to have a school building that looked kind of like the United Nations. It is important to me and I know it is important to other parents as well. I also want to see the Title I impact and whatever else you need to know.

Mrs. Minneci stated so we need a consensus to move to the next step.

Mr. Monge stated you are going to need money to have someone do a cost analysis because a cost analysis will have to be extremely detailed and high level. So the question is, is it in the budget? If not? You look for x-amount of dollars for feasibility analysis that will provide demographics, cost assumptions.

Mr. Tatum stated if the concept is sold but we don't have the money, we need to raise money – that means a bond referendum.

Mr. Monge stated before you go full steam ahead you need to look for more information and one is a high level cost assumption and you will not be able to get to that point to be able to have that high level cost assumption without engaging someone to do it.

Dr. Morgan asked was a demographer consulted? Did you bring in someone to tell you what the bills are going to look like once this plan goes into place? I don't know if anyone has the skill to do that. You are going to have to bring in someone, a certified demographer, to show you who will be in the building, male/female, black/white, or whatever that needs to be presented to us before we can.

Mr. Tatum stated that is fine. It might not be today but at some point you have to change the community in this district and it is going to cost money but to be done the right way it is going to cost money and I recognize that. We had a discussion about that the last time we met about those issues. Although there are preliminary steps, I think the outcome of this is something that I think we are going to have to rethink – if it doesn't come out configuratively the way we think it will be then other adjustments have to be made to make it happen because unfortunately I continue to operate the way we operate now.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated in Ms. Hall's presentation she said the last time we touched our schools is 1969. Obviously we cannot continue to educate our learners in a 1969 model. It will not work. I am a big believer with moving with times our students are moving. We have to support them through SEL, equity, excellence and we have to make sure we are addressing those

divergent learners. We have a lot of divergent learners in our district. The only way that will happen is our building needs to be restructured. Great minds need to come together and I believe all minds from all areas needs to come together to figure this out. At the end of the day it is about student outcome. I think if we have that as the goal then we can move.

Mr. Tatum stated what I'm hearing is we want to do this but let's slow it down a little bit, let's identify some of the concerns that have come up tonight and try to make one of our main goals is to determine the demographics, the costs, capacity of the building – we have that but again from an external point of view. I don't know how much we can do about the home value piece. I would love to see the schools in this district be able to provide all the children a good education no matter where they go to school. Mr. Minneci stated no matter what section of Town they are in.

Mr. Tatum stated wouldn't it be nice to have kids start to take pride in their school. We talk about having input from children. If they start to talk about how good it is in that school. Part of the problem in Union is the mindset has always been that way and leave things as they are. It doesn't work anymore. Mr. McDowell stated one of the most economically challenged areas will have the newest school – Jefferson. They will have a nice school. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I don't think it is about a nice school, I believe it is about the quality. Mr. McDowell stated we are trying to make it the same throughout. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated it is about the quality of instruction that is going to be in that school; that when those kids are standard base tested or whatever, they are going to produce. It is the quality that comes in there that is going to make the difference and leadership. Mr. Tatum stated it goes back to the idea of school attachment and happy about being there, learn and prosper – that is great. It may not matter if the school is brand new or not, that may be a good sale to the community, but it matters the most whether or not when I go there I really want to be there; my teachers care about me. I heard a speaker say kids know when you care about them and they know when you don't.

Mrs. Richardson stated I think a lot of good things happen in the Union school district. We have great plays, activities, sports teams and we don't brag enough about it. We really have to get ourselves out there for people to know that we really have quality, talented students, teachers – the entire district – so people know that Union is the place to be. Mr. Tatum stated and how better we can become. Mrs. Richardson stated and what we are doing to become better. We need to find out the cost and we need to tap into every avenue there is to get – bond referendum – we will have to push for it.

Mr. Tatum stated once we get the cost analysis together, that will determine what direction we go in. Once the Board feels comfortable for us to move forward, we will start tapping in. The price to me is not as great as the results.

Mr. McDowell asked do we need a deadline to report back? Mr. Tatum stated we have ongoing meetings. We have to get the schedule together for the regular planning committee for the school year coming up. We meet regularly. We want to immerse ourselves a lot in this school year so realistically can we say October? Ms. Hall stated we are supposed to go to the Town in October and hopefully have a cost analysis done by then.

Mr. Tatum asked will the Board allow us to go to the Town without the numbers? Or come back to you before we go there? Ms. Hall stated we need the numbers before. Mr. Tatum stated I don't think it can be done this month. Mrs. Ruiz stated it doesn't make sense to go to the Town without numbers.

Mr. Tatum stated what we have to look at is the Town and the school district – there are two issues going here – one is the need for our children; the other thing is the need for there to be some support from the community to fund a project that is going to help move the district forward. Of what I heard there are people that are not too happy about that we are building and there is no communication between the school district and the Township. It is beneficial for everyone to understand what this can become and what the capacity of our schools are and if the money is actually funded through. You talk about property values – if all schools are good, people are going to come and buy. You have beautiful homes in Union. Mrs. Richardson stated they look at school districts first.

Discussion Items:

1. Goal setting
2. Grade-level configuration
3. District demographics
4. Budget planning for 2020-2021
5. Educational Goals/Grants

Mr. Tatum stated I think we discussed 2 and 3 in our presentation.

Goal setting - we can conclude under goal setting – we need to identify a plan of action includes how to finance the configuration project also the demographics of the Town and how the reconfiguration would look and that is a goal to strive for. That is two goals and it is not something that we can solve by the next time we come to you guys. Part two of the goal is the funding, how we go about getting that funding and how it affects the budget.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated if you are talking about goals, if we are heading in that direction, you have to work a framework that embodies a great school. For me that is big goal that I would like to see as a Board member, as a member of the community and as a stakeholder is a goal around the framework for becoming a great school. I'm sitting here and you are talking and it has to involve trust – this goal. It has to involve instruction that is rigorous for our students, supportive environment for our students and our community; collaboration between teachers – to me it is adding a goal based on a framework for our district which embodies trust, collaboration, supportive environment, rigorous instructions and that kind of framework. Mr. Tatum stated it goes back to the social emotional piece, instructional and I think I'm hearing and you put it another way – a lot of what we already talked about considering. We also talked about this ideal school and what it actually looks like – do some visitations of some effective middle schools. Research speaks to the fact that most middle schools concept doesn't work but when they do work it has to be a highly specialized program and it deals with high level of instruction, engagement, attachment to the school, supportive staff, a belief system which is embodied on old form of research – effective school research. All those pieces that come from there certainly

haven't fallen by the waist side, I think those schools really need to project what you are talking about; have those components in them.

Dr. Morgan stated Ms. Hall you mentioned 9th grade academy – where would that be housed and what would that look like. Ms. Hall stated that would be at Union High School and try to give an area of the high school to focus on that freshman transition. Mr. Tatum stated it is transitional from what is happening in the 8th grade and then 9th grade. You want that area contained. Dr. Morgan stated I'm glad it would be in the same building. In my former district we did the same thing we did k-7, 8-9 and then 10-11-12 and by the time they got to me they acted like freshmen all over again. Mr. Tatum stated in years passed we did talk about an 8-9 concept but that was just talking about what we could with the buildings without doing any research. Doing the research, we looked at different configurations and then we talked about what would be best for this district and what we know our needs are. This is how you go about succeeding not how you fail – and that is what the 9th grade academy is all about.

The budget plan – that is a huge piece. I want to inform the Board that even the budget that we had this year, we had meetings every month – Central Office. We talked before about a budget calendar. I think for those of you who are in the finance committee, what you need to get every month is a breakdown of what we are talking about in those meetings so we can talk about where we are in the budget process.

Dr. Morgan stated the BA is to come with an agenda. Mr. Tatum stated correct. The issue is your items are on the agenda but the overview of where we are on the budget will come from the business office. When I hear you guys say you don't know that we have been planning a budget or information and then I can say to everyone in this room has been part of that process. One thing we developed is a corrective action plan from the prior year. I think we have to start looking at how we ensure that you guys get the information and you know where we are all the time. Yes around October we will be starting the budgeting process again. We also have to take a look at the realities. The realities right now – we will get a small increase in State aid, probably \$300,000. Simultaneous to all the other things we are talking about doing, we also have to start looking at how we can start knocking on people's doors because this district is not going to continue to run within a percentage of a dollar amount that we are underfunded by. I'm not speaking off the top of my head, I'm speaking about the research I have done and people I have talked to in the State of New Jersey, including the Commissioner of Education as to what our funding level is really like. The issue that has become is we talk about special education, grossly underfunded, I know that the UTEA went to Washington to try to get more federal funds for us. The question we have to raise is how do we anticipate with the amount of money that we have as a source of revenue – how do we anticipate what that is going to look like without having funding coming from the sources that give us the mandates. The other thing that has to be part of our discussions is our tax levy and we were told that we might have to ask to go above the cap. The 2% on the tax levy that was imposed in 2011 happens to have also pulled this district back because of some of the money we lost in prior years. The budgeting process is going to be a big challenge this year. If you said to me that one of your goals for the budget would be that you want a monthly report to the finance committee and the entire Board to get a sense of where we are. I think that is a doable goal.

Dr. Morgan stated I'm glad you said that. The budget calendar, once it is put together, can you please put in there when you are meeting the principals, central office staff and all of that so monthly we will be able to know what was done and what was said so if we have to cut somebody they will know in enough time so we wouldn't have what we had this year.

Mr. Tatum stated one of the things that we have and I have my secretary in there taking notes. Dr. Morgan stated let's just be transparent and provide us with more information. Mr. Tatum stated I think that is a fair request. Every time I go to a County or State meeting, that is on my calendar and we meet every month as long as there is something pertinent – and normally in those meetings something comes out about the budget process and funding. One of our goals is to keep the Board informed about the budgeting process and anything that is coming down the wire that is adverse or controversial so you know where we are at all times.

Mr. McDowell stated this schedule from the school boards, would this be something that we can hold peoples feet to the fire on? Most of this takes place in mid-March. I think just making that part of the agenda – bringing the Board up-to-date on what was done for 20-21.

Mr. Monge stated you build the budget calendar off of that. Unfortunately the budget calendar is not always final. The finance committee, you have the ability to actually be part of the presentations. You can actually have department heads present their budget to the Board – it has never been done.

Dr. Morgan stated I have friend who is a BA in Summit so he sent me their budget calendar – it is very detailed – dates, who does what and not saying you are not doing it, but again you need to be a little more transparent so we wouldn't have what we had before.

Mrs. Ruiz stated that budget calendar would be so much more helpful to the Board members as far as educating us – I am not part of the finance committee – I have no idea what is happening. Two months into my membership I was presented a budget with zero back up and 24 hours' notice. I voted no because I had no idea what went into that and later found out that the budget included the cuts of paras which I had no way of knowing from looking at that. I am not naïve, I know that cuts are necessary, I'm an employer I have to make cuts some time too and I run a non-profit so I get the funding issues but I have to know what I'm looking at to make an informed decision.

Mr. Tatum stated although sometimes I forget that I'm not the BA, send it to me. Dr. Morgan stated the BA should help you out here because that is part of his job.

Mrs. Richardson stated it has been a tough two years. The first year we got a \$8.5 million deficit. Mr. Tatum stated that \$8.5 million deficit has been growing over the years. Mrs. Richardson stated Jeff and I sat with the BA and his assistant, we were a little bit taken aback and upset. It came as a shock. Then you got involved and straightened it out. Mr. Tatum stated the administration of how the budget is configured is something that I will be working with.

Dr. Morgan stated you will be interviewing soon – correct? Mr. Tatum stated we will have to go into executive session.

Education – Mrs. Moses stated we will start with Title I. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated this past year we went through the transition of Title I schoolwide for the high school, Burnet and Franklin and that process was very interesting. We developed an annual school plan for each school. We had annual school planning teams and meetings in all three schools. We did a comprehensive data analysis and we looked at all the prior year interventions. We did a comprehensive needs assessment, root cause analysis, developed smart goals so now starting in September will be the implementation of the programs and then we do progress monitoring throughout the year. We will have planning teams again in each of the schools and we will look at the data and how we are progressing towards those smart goals for next year.

One of the things at the high school, we implemented Algebra I lab classes in the 9th grade and some 10th grade and also ELA lab classes in the 9th and 10th grades. We did find, like you did, that 9th grade is a very crucial year and that is where the kids really need a lot of help when they transition from the 8th grade to the 9th grade, especially in math.

Implementation of schoolwide PBSIS program, SEL initiatives, inter programs and services – Jill Hall has helped a lot with that – our afterschool mentoring program.

Increase STEM opportunities – one thing I'm really excited about is the fusion of science with the career tech ed program. I have been talking about that for years. I didn't feel it should be separate – we have science, we have STEM and career tech ed – we really need to merge them. We need to get some of those career tech ed programs up into more of the STEM programs instead of a woods program and we need to develop them for the 21st century skills.

Expanding college access in advance learning opportunities – one of the things we talked about is after school power hour or tutoring to prepare students for higher level classes such as honors and AP so that kids that are in regular classes they can come after school and they can be prepared to go into the honors classes and AP so they can get that additional support after school.

After school matters program – we are going to look into continuing that. One of the big components, I'm talking about the social emotional learning, was the counseling and mentoring that Jill Hall did a lot of.

Implementation of star renaissance in the Algebra I and ELA lab course – this is an assessment and data collection tool that we will be using so we can collect the data to see if our programs are working and not waiting until our NJSLA scores come in – by that point it is a little too late. This will be an increased monitoring throughout the school year.

Increase number of parent involvement workshops – what I would like to do is a survey at Back-to-School Night to see what parents would like to see in workshops throughout the school year; what time is good parents to be there; do they need babysitting; transportation and things like that.

Burnet Middle School – we went through the whole process. One of the things we found out – 6th grade, the kids are struggling with math and language arts because of that transition.

They are coming into 6th grade without the foundation skills in math and language arts so we are going to target grades 6 – math and language arts with intensified cross work to provide foundational skills and additional support.

We also found that students that received a two on the NJSLA in 5th grade, they tend to get a two in 6th, 7th and 8th grade and they struggle throughout the whole middle school years. We want to get them at that point.

Also schoolwide PBSIS, SEL initiatives – we are going to have coaches come in and do lesson studies with math and language art teachers.

Afterschool STEM program called “design it” – I’m incorporating that and that is coming from Rutgers 4H. Six projects they will work on after school in their junior engineering club.

Franklin – implementation of project based learning during school day, afterschool project based learning, establish SEL programs during recess time for each grade level.

Hannah Caldwell – is now going to be Title I – not schoolwide. They have to go with targeted assistance first.

Extended day program – how we are going to mirror what we have done at Franklin which will be the project based learning; also the SEL program research.

We all will be researching more grant opportunities; collaborating with the principals and supervisors to apply for grants in particular – STEM, technology, increase opportunities for students in high school to be more involved in external internships with businesses and corporations.

Technology, media, science and research, engineering, trades, plumbing, electrician, contractors – I want to work more with the Perkins Grant and work on getting those internships into the district.

Continual overseeing funds for Title IIA, focus on PD and training, equity in action, Title III, ESL, ELL, immigrant, Title IV, continue with the SEL, career and college opportunities.

Mrs. Moses stated Title I support the curriculum and that is where the funding comes from. It is there for extra support for students. What we are doing is making sure every child is provided that opportunity.

We talked about schools going K-6, report cards and how they should look – the other night someone said we never talk about equity – but I’m here to tell you that we talked about equity in 2016 and every principal was abreast on equity and education, equity and curriculum, equity and hiring. It doesn’t mean equal opportunity, it is providing our students with what they need and that is what equity is about. The initiative from the State is equity and action. Every principal and administrator in Central Office has been abreast about equity since 2016. We are now in full stage and the State of New Jersey will be implementing throughout New Jersey 4

million kids through equity in education. The Commissioner told me personally to my face. There will be no if, ands or buts – that is the way it is going to go. The kids will come first.

What we are going to do is – old school is let's talk about math – what percentage – it is not about that it is about kids knowing, having inquiry, asking questions and challenging educators and parents and community. Last year if you look at the planning session we had student liaison last year and that is not by mistake that they are on here today. We put down pre-school. I'm going to say this to everyone in this room by the time I came up to Central Office, everything from the Board of Education – when we put things in place, we need to carry it out, to be consistent. We can have all the meetings that we want, we can challenge one another back and forth, but let me tell you something, when we do that we better think about the trust level. I have been working in this district for a very long time and I have seen the changes come through and sometimes people don't like the change but the world will always change. We are going to keep moving.

I will tell you about the equity in education and why we are going to have goals that do not look like what you think they should look like. We are going to start with administration first because bottom up doesn't work. It is top down and when any implementation from the State of New Jersey is coming in it is coming from the pre-school and moving up. We put into equity from the top down. Everyone in this room and our students are stakeholders and they are number one. What they need is what we have to provide whether we like it or not. The process does not move so swiftly. We would like it to. We would like to say it today and have it tomorrow but it doesn't work that way and it is a challenge.

I'm going to read this “insuring that all students opportunities to succeed” meaning specifically of diverse populations such as ESL, special education, gifted and talented and children that are in the middle. Any one of those students in any one of those categories fall in the middle and you can't forget them – that is every child. Challenge your students by high quality academics, opportunities which is essential to students' success regardless of students' circumstances (and that covers everything – emotional, financial) all students have an opportunity and the ability to achieve at the highest level – that is our responsibility. When we put that on the table – we can talk SEL, RTI, we need this, we need that but what we need is to develop our children in our community. We talked about separation, there is no separation because the State won't allow us to separate. We are not going to separate our children. The opportunities for them to get involved in everything – I mean activities after school. You heard me say that before, you say why don't we have activities after school for all kids – why does it look like just some kids, why doesn't it look like all children in activities. I know a lot of kids that I would like to see in activities that are not in after school activities. These are the goals that mean something to me because when we give kids what they need they will learn, give to their community, kinder to one another but if we don't give them what they need, then what do we expect.

Data collection decision-making from the staff will be shared with the school community and it will be weeks of intervals. I'm not saying good, bad or indifferent – it is not about that it is about what is it that we are doing and what we need to do better to service our children and that is what is important to me and everyone in this room because you wouldn't be here if it

wasn't. The intervals of data – why we are doing what we are doing – mom, dad, teacher - you may not like it, that is too bad because I serve the children so we give them what they need – that is one of our goals.

The next goal – Central Office Administration – our ability and our willingness to continue to support and promote the environment of continued improvement and innovations that results in higher performing district results that is 100% focused on student achievement and success. I'm not saying every kid will be 100% but we need to be 100% focused on what our kids need. Sometimes we hear we are not offering things but we have changed a lot of things. There were things we didn't have for our children; we opened up the door for a lot of things and the kids will tell you that. We are giving them opportunities. People may not know all of that but we are addressing the children's needs. I came up with "all hands on deck" but the new one is "focus on students".

How do you assess that? When you have reflections and you have those discussions, when you have your minutes, that is your documentation. The data – how do we know it is working? We know it is working when suspension is down, we see more acts of kindness, we see teachers, administrators participating in community events. The kids live around and they see and they are involved. The data will prove itself because we will have that in reflection, student participation, student ideas. The data doesn't have to be numbers. When we believe and praise our children they will rise. They spend a lot of time here so it is our job too. It is our job not to ever let them see that there is no trust. Because without trust brings about fear.

I'm saying this because the other goal is we are going to have student liaisons sitting at the table. I didn't pick the students but I know the students and I was happy to see them. Mrs. Monge was with me. I know she felt what I felt in that room. There is nothing like it. I'm impressed and happy to be working with the kids because that is the prize at the end of the day. When our kids sit in this room, it is a goal that they come into this room and they sit in this room they want to see adults and people working in harmony. We want that for them. Our job is to make them speak up and our job is to hear them. We will see those results and they will share with their friends.

We wanted a pre-school, we got a pre-school, pushing for this we are getting that – we want the ACE program, we are going to get the ACE program. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated dual language. Mrs. Moses stated we can do it. Just because a student doesn't do well on a test doesn't mean the child is not a hard worker.

Dr. Morgan stated I listen to the many programs that are coming here – what are we doing to develop teachers. Mrs. Moses stated I will read them out to you "Leading an Equity System", "Curriculum Instructions for Social Emotion Learning", "Providing Pathways for Students" and any additional programs we can put in place at any given time. These are always after and before school. There is nothing kids should go without.

The personal and professional development – the focus on equity in personnel and professional development – when principals go to meetings, we need to pick the candidates that understands what is equity in personnel. A person that is ready to move in front. Out of the box

that we have been in – can your heart do it; are you an advocate for children. Equity in personnel is very important. People want to see people that look like them – everybody does – no matter who you are. Everybody has been in a situation, I believe, in a room where you say – can I find somebody like me please. It could be all men and you are the only woman or all woman and you are the only man. When kids see that and I have been here for a very long time and I have seen a lot of things and I can tell you that I have worked with students that said some things to me and I didn't believe really existed but it was not for me to judge the child, it was for me to change the mindset of the child and therefore change the mindset of the parents. That is what is very important. Equity in personnel is very important and sometimes we are going to hear things, and it is not personal – when someone comes and tell us about this group is this way and this group is this way, don't take it personal – we are learning. It is called multicultural diversity and learning about the kids that sit in front of you – you want to know and you need to know. All I'm saying is our goals in education this year is more about the social/emotional not only of the students but leaders, parents and everyone. Whatever emotional issues they bring to the table, we are to address it and do not take it personal because we have to address the whole child and that includes the mom, the dad, the dog, the cat, everybody in the family. You need to know everyone. Don't take it personal when someone questions you and says things to you. We have professional development that come in and tell us like it is – not about us. When we tell us what is in front of us, we are working with diverse families, blended families – don't take it personal – it is about learning about our students and our job is to teach them.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I was a bit worried when it first started with the presentation but I'm so happy to see that you brought the goals home because you really did bring them home and I'm happy these goals are focused around student outcomes. It is fantastic goals. Right now we have to adapt the model of smart which is what you addressed. All the goals were specific. They were measurable. They are achievable. They are relevant and they are time bound and that is what we need and that speaks from Jill's presentation and going all the way around. Kudos – very nice. Mrs. Moses stated it is all a team effort and this is from September to June. The students really matter to us.

Mr. Tatum stated when you talk about equity in personnel and I'm thinking about something we just did recently in one of our meetings. Mrs. Moses stated communicating with the community that is very important. Mr. Tatum stated we recognized there was an issue in a particular school where it would advance the offerings not only for the district but for particular students and in doing some research we ended up reversing something that was put in place that again had been in place for a number of years – it was being taken apart so when you talk about equity in personnel, I think that is a perfect example of what we just did recently in order to ensure that equity continued in the district as opposed to separating where we would fall apart and I think that is a great example.

Mrs. Ruiz stated you mentioned that in the research you found that 6th grade students entering Burnet were coming in without certain math and English skills and I recall Mr. Malanda giving a presentation a few months ago at the Board of Ed and saying the same thing about the 6th graders coming into Kawameeh – my question is why is that happening? Where is the disconnect? Why are we seeing rising 6th graders coming from Jefferson into either of the middle schools unprepared? Mrs. Moses stated this is the reason why we talked about it in our

education committee about working with the State Department of Education with the connection road map. We are focusing on mathematics. It is a grant and pilot program for the State and it is from K-6 in Algebra. When we do that we will be working with a new roll out plan. It doesn't matter the math book, what matters is the concept. It doesn't matter in the test, it matters in the kids' knowledge and not afraid to attempt and try. Kids coming in there is a fear in math. My daughter didn't like math but she moved through it and she is successful in what she does today. Math is hard. How you deliver it and how you bring it to a student that is very important. The teachers are certified and able to teach it but how we are teaching it is how it is relevant to them. How you are offering it up to them; how you are enticing them with it – it is like an appetite and once you love it you want to explore it. That is what we are working with and my fingers are crossed that we get that pilot with grant money attached to it and have teachers with professional development. All those things are very important. 100% focused, no denying, no turning away because it is painful, address it, focus, go all in – that is how we are going to do it and that is what we are working on. If that doesn't happen we can still be a part of it we just don't get the money.

Mr. Tatum stated the question is are we doing something between grades 5 and 6 that is not appropriate – instruction wise or age wise. We talked about the needs of 6th grade children and we are seeing it and we talked about it in the presentation earlier, the needs of 6th graders and the developmental milestones. The question I raise – when kids leave 5th grade and are going to a situation where they are being set up not by virtue of anyone wanting them to do well but by virtue of our structure and the way we transition. Is that really ideal for them to actually maintain and achieve? I think that may be another piece that goes along with it. Once again you have students going into two directions, you have expectations for them where they are moving all over the place – I read a study where students move around the school all day long and about students that were in an environment where the movement was much slower – the end result was something like this – the students moving around the school all day long were exhausted and they never had the opportunity to practice their learning the day that was taking place in the classroom. The students that were more in a team approach actually had time to practice what they were doing and therefore the achievement was higher. The reality is are we doing the right thing structurally to ensure that achievement is going up. Research says when you take a 6th grader and run around a school all day long, their focus and ability to practice what they are learning in the classroom is lessened. That may be another issue there.

Dr. Morgan stated that can be an issue but my experience with my own son was it was instruction. I spoke to Mrs. Moses a long time ago before I got on the Board – it was the instruction that was not taking place in the classroom. My question was who is monitoring what is written in the curriculum and is actually taking place in the classroom. The curriculum is great. That has always been my issue. One son went to Franklin, one son went to Connecticut Farms – two different kids based on what was taught – even my 9th grader was upset, he said he didn't learn this in elementary school. I hope that once we start talking about professional development and everything that is going on that what is being taught in one school and being monitored by one principal is being taught in another school and monitored by the other principal – that is where the disconnect is.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated we looked at that in the education committee when we reviewed the rubric and that is when all the leadership came together and spoke about the mid-term exam and the disconnect and I think they actually took that feedback and was going to readjust some of that. Mrs. Moses stated we talked about in education committee – leadership – we have to pave a path and we have to follow this together and that what was on that agenda. It is very important that we have this understanding of the expectations of the district and where we need to go.

Mrs. Ruiz stated you mentioned increasing internship opportunities for our high school seniors with local businesses. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated we went to a meeting about Perkins and during that meeting that is the way the Perkins Grant is going to go – not this year coming up but that is what they want to do for the following year – most of the money is going to be spent on developing those external internships.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I want to make a suggestion. I work in Perth Amboy and we have a program there called “the summer success bound program” – a subpart to this suggestion is to seek private funding – this program is a partnership between Middlesex County College, the high school in Perth Amboy and the local businesses and organizations. They got funding through FedEx and some other private funders and were able to place 75 rising juniors and seniors into internships with local organizations but at the same time those students take college level courses at Middlesex County College. It was half day at school, half day go to work – I hosted three of those interns. They get paid through the city because the funding comes from the city and the college credits are covered by the rest of the funding that they received through the grant application. For the kids it is a win-win. We had a young lady that we hosted that will graduate this June from high school, will start college with nine college credits – that is nine college credits that her parents don’t have to pay for. It is invaluable college experience, business experience that the employer did not have to pay for and the parents didn’t have to pay for. We got great labor and we had the opportunity to mentor our young students and the college was able to receive many of these students. Once they are there, they can enroll in the county college if they wanted to. I would suggest that we field the idea. It works; it is a great program. We can create something similar. It would require a partnership between the Town Council and the school district and the local vendors. I’m sure there are local businesses that would love to host some of our students. They have to write an essay, there is an interview process – there is a very thorough screening process but it is a win-win for everyone.

Mrs. Moses stated the Board of Education was on a committee like that. Mr. Tatum stated that was sponsored through the Chamber of Commerce. Mrs. Ruiz stated if we could implement a program like that it would be great.

Mrs. Monge stated this is to piggyback on what Dr. Morgan said about having two students in two different schools and not having the same experience. I find that is the case even when you have two students in the same school with different math, English teachers. I wish there was a way to hold them accountable to teaching the same thing and that they are actually teaching all the time.

I’m glad to hear about the PD on equity. I hope that will be inclusive of students that have special needs. Mrs. Moses stated absolutely. Mrs. Monge stated I have had kids here from

pre-k to high school and I find that teachers in the elementary and middle school level are definitely more accepting, understanding, nurturing and then when you go into the high school, the culture is very different. There are some really amazing teachers but I find there are parent inquiries and concerns but not the availability that was found in the middle and elementary school levels.

Mrs. Santana stated free lunch has something to do with Title I. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated just for the funding. Mrs. Santana stated parents who probably should be asking for free or reduced lunch, they don't. I'm not going to try to do the psychology but I was thinking with all of these balances that we have of people that owe lots of money – are we sending the free lunch application to the people that owe money? I'm free and reduced and I will put it out there. In Washington School I tell everybody. I don't know how successful I can be at Washington but I feel in our other schools - Jefferson School – I found out that they are not Title I. I don't know what we need to do but we need to do something to get those applications out there. Just feel it out, you don't know what it is going to come back with. Even if they question it – I don't care if you question me. One time they said Chasity, you're Santana – you have a Rojas, you have a Flannagan and an Asavido. I said yes my children have a lot of last names – what do you need birth certificates? Here, knock yourself out I have no problem with that. Once we do that I think it will get better. Mrs. Guilfoyle stated I know Meg Berry has been working on that and trying to get the process a little easier. We do have parents for whatever reason do not want to fill out that form.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated there is no free and reduced lunch application – there is only one lunch application. We cannot put that out there that there is a free and reduced lunch application, that puts us in a very difficult position. It is a lunch application. Parents have the right to choose or not to apply. Mrs. Minneci stated there is a box that says “I do not wish”.

Mrs. Santana stated if I'm negative \$500 in my child's account, maybe send it. Mrs. Minneci stated I have spoken to principals and they have called parents in and explained to them but they don't want it and they say you owe the money – but they choose not to. Mrs. Santana stated and we are not holding them accountable? Mrs. Minneci stated you can't make them sign that they need the reduced.

Dr. Morgan stated in fairness to the parents. Some parents make enough over the threshold and they just cannot afford the lunch. Let's say the threshold is \$35,000 and I make \$40,000 – that is not a lot of money living in Union. They won't qualify if they do apply because they make over the amount of money. Mrs. Santana stated I understand but the balances – they should be satisfied. Dr. Morgan stated if they don't have it to pay how are you going to get it? Mrs. Santana stated my oldest – my 26 year old, when he was in Woodbridge High School they sent me a bill – your kid lost a book, you owe \$13 in the lunch. He doesn't get a diploma if you don't pay the \$93.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated that is sketchy because whether or not the child applies for a lunch application or not, the district has to provide the child with a lunch. As a parent, there are a lot of loopholes – I don't fill out a lunch application, they are still going to feed my child and I'm not going to get billed because you have to feed my child. There are a lot of ways to go

around it. The whole point is that we need to get the word out there to parents to encourage them to fill out the free and reduced lunch application. I think that is the most that we are allowed to do – tell them how to access the application and if they can't access it through online at home through a computer, that we can provide a hard copy to all parents. That is as much as the law is allowing us to do.

Kathleen Brunsmeyer stated when we have back-to-school night, we open up early for the AAP and I think we should open up at every school the computer lab for parents who can't or just don't know how to access. Let's have a person in the school to be there to help them fill out the application and have them send it to see if they qualify. If we put a positive spin that we are trying to help them and the children out – it might change something.

Mr. Tatum stated unless regulations have changed – what happens with the free and reduced lunch application – whatever is on the form you have to take it at face value. There are different formulas that are plugged in to determine that application – how you get paid. Nothing changes unless there is a focus verification or it is pulled randomly for verification. It never hurts anybody to apply for the lunch program. At the end of the day there are probably people all over the United States that are getting free and reduced and they don't qualify for it. Mrs. Santana stated there is an audit process because I did get audited because all my kids have different last names. Mr. Tatum stated if something looks suspicious you can do an immediate verification on that application on the spot. Usually by the second week of November there is a verification process where applicants are pulled randomly – it is 3% of the population of the district. You have to pull and send the information to the State and sometimes their determination will change based on what they reported. There have been people on free lunch and then they were denied because their information is different than they reported.

Paul Casey stated I have been beating the drum on equity for all children for years going back as far as a resolution passed by Mr. McDowell in 2017 – educating all children – earlier this year we were able to introduce the Union Public Schools to the diversity council on global educational citizenship. The resource center at Kean University runs that program and they have 70 school districts in the State of New Jersey that are part of this initiative and Union wasn't one of them – now Union is one of them. As of September, six teachers in the district will be taking a Holocaust education course which will follow up by a prejudice prevention course in the spring semester. The 8th grade student leadership program will be participating in a leadership conference at Kean University in the spring. These are things that are speaking to the professional development and the equity and we are making sure that it comes into our district.

Comments from Public

Chasity Santana stated as many of you know, I serve as diversity and inclusion chair for the New Jersey PTA and I recently went to a training and I spoke with Ms. Hall and Mrs. Moses about it. It was something that I didn't know Congress enacted this so I wanted to share it. This passed/approved January 31, 2019 and it is Chapter 6 – an act concerning instruction and instructional materials in public schools and supplementing Chapter 5 of Title 18 of the New Jersey Statutes. It was enacted by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey. It is the history of disabled and LGBT persons. This is to be included in middle and high school curriculum.

“1. Board of educations should include instruction on the political, economic and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in an appropriate place in the curriculum of middle school and high school students as part of the district’s implementation of the New Jersey Learning Standards.

2. A board of education shall have policies and procedures in place pertaining to the selection of instructional material to implement the requirements of Section 1 of this Act. When adopting these materials for use in the school district, a board of education shall adopt inclusive instructional materials that portray the cultural and economic diversity of society and it is included in the political economic and social contributions with people with disabilities and LGBTQ where appropriate.”

One of the things I got out of this was this should not be a seminar that you go to or something you see for an hour as PD. It is something that is fluid in the curriculum. This means this should be happening in Spanish, French, gym, as you go to the bathroom – whatever it is – as you are speaking to the other peers. It is the language that we are using to identify people with disabilities or children that are LGBTQ identified. I just wanted to put it out there to the Board because this is something important in our schools. This is specifically for middle and high school curriculum. There is a pilot program that I spoke to Mrs. Moses about that I would love for her to try to get into. It is only for 12 schools in New Jersey. Moving forward if we don’t get into the pilot program, I feel this is something very important for our children and this specific population. I feel it is specific to our conversation today because we kept talking about diversity, inclusion and how we are moving forward as a model district.

Mrs. Moses stated we have our equity plan that the Board of Education always approves that – it goes to the County. One of the things you just said is making sure our kids know about the different cultures and the diversity of the world. We have purchased many books throughout our schools and we will continue to have these readings.

Sandra Paul stated when we started to review the Comprehensive Equity Plan, I requested all the librarians to go through their entire catalogue system to see what was is there to realize if there was a gap somewhere. Because the biggest thing was to make sure kids had the ability to see a mirror of themselves in a book or an e-book. We developed with the librarians plus colleagues of mind – librarians throughout the State – we developed a whole group of books and with Mrs. Moses helping us out, we were able to get books for every building. Every library is going to have these books. It is an actual focus for the library because the library to me is the most equitable space there is. Every child has the ability to go into that library and be themselves. I want whatever media that is in that library to reflect that so they can go in and find themselves in a book, video or any form of media that they want to find it in. Mrs. Moses and I have been working on the libraries to reflect the diversity of Union – which is a wonderful community. Mrs. Moses stated a blended family. Mrs. Paul stated yes blended families – talking about the different things kids go through; even the economic levels of understanding the refugee situation and what it really means to be a refugee and also the problem about being an

immigrant and having the ability to go to college or not go to college - those different things. It has to reflect the different things that are happening in our culture and climate.

Mrs. Richardson stated on Connecticut Farms traffic study with the bridge – it has been pushed back to 2021 but in the meantime Mr. Tatum, Nancy, Barry and myself, worked on reconstructing the way children are disbursed in the morning and picked up after school so there would no longer be in any danger of crossing the streets. That is supposed to be implemented the first day of school.

Mrs. Moses stated Mrs. Warren came up to speak with me and Mr. Loessel today. She is going to call on her school community to help her do a dry run to see how it is going to work for her students - the exiting and entering into the building and so on – where she is going to put staff on duty in the mornings. Parents are involved the first couple of days and then they do the transition where parents cannot come on the playground any more. She doesn't want to block it off at first for the first couple of days because the parents have to welcome themselves into the school. It will be after that where they will do it. They will do the run sometime this month.

Mrs. Minneci asked was she happy with the configuration? Mrs. Moses stated she was very happy but going back to communicating with parents and you have to give them time to come in and that is one of our goals. Mrs. Minneci stated to get adjusted.

Mr. Monge stated that has been on my list for three years. We actually engaged that traffic study. Mr. Tatum stated the group here met with the traffic study guy with recommendations. He actually came in. Mrs. Richardson stated hearing him, the children were at risk and that became a concern and that had to be taken care of now. Mr. Monge stated this is three years. We actually fought to try to get someone engaged we financed that. The guy came to meet with the parents and we thought we were going to get a presentation and he comes out and says what is going on. We had the police department there. We wasted a year of continuing to say what is going on and it was pushed back. At the end of the day, if something is happening and this gentleman is involved – he got paid. Mr. Tatum stated to deliver a report to us. Mr. Monge stated it was supposed to be presented to the parents who were supposed to review it. I hope we don't butt out the parents because they have been waiting years. Mr. Tatum stated as I mentioned before, Hannah Caldwell was another school that for even longer we had problems over there. All these spots that we have had issues with, we are trying to do the best we can to correct it. I agree it is taking longer than it should have.

Mr. Monge stated I came in and I said this and that but the parents are the ones that are living this on a daily basis. They said they already had the best plan and it was trying to take those ideas to the parents with the guys expertise and being able to execute. Let's just make sure we get the parents involved.

Mrs. Minneci stated we had the meeting and the Town came, Officer Donnelly, and he said you can't have them crossing it is too dangerous the way they come in. There is going to be no parking on the side of where that parking lot is. There is two ways of traffic but they really worked it out. We asked if we can make it a one way. Now they widened the driveway by the school. Hopefully it will work out well.

Thank you everyone.

Motion to Adjourn

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Mrs. Ruiz, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:42 p.m. All present voting YES MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

GREGORY E. BRENNAN
BOARD SECRETARY