

UNION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
PLANNING SESSION AGENDA
FEBRUARY 7, 2017

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The planning session meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, February 7, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. at the James Caulfield Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey 07083

Mr. McDowell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mr. David Arminio, Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Ron McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. Jeffrey Monge, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams, Mrs. Nancy Zuena

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Mr. Gregory Tatum, Mr. Gerry Benaquista, Mr. Gregory Brennan, Mr. Manuel Vieira, Mr. Barry Loessel, Mrs. Kim Conti

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

Mr. Brennan read the statement required under the "Open Public Meetings Act", a copy of which is on file in the office of the Board Secretary.

Mr. McDowell stated this is our planning meeting tonight and we have set a time limit of two hours (7 p.m. to 9 p.m.). Hopefully we will meet that constraint and we are going to have updates tonight on different items for each committee.

EDUCATION/STUDENT DISCIPLINE:

Mr. Tatum stated unfortunately Mrs. Moses is not able to be with us due to other obligations. Mr. Benaquista and I will attempt to fill her shoes and it may not be easy. There are a couple of items under Education that we want to give you an overview.

Most of what we see here are part of the District Action Plan and at the end where we mention Old Business – update on District goals. Most of what you see here links into the District's overview which was presented in August.

Tonight under Education, in this order, we will hear from ESS first, then Mr. Benaquista and I will talk about the summer programs, curriculum updates and our meeting with Kean University last Thursday regarding programing issues that ties into the District curriculum and

programs that we talked about trying to get them off the ground. Board of Education members please feel free to jump in if there are any questions and/or comments you may have about anything that we are doing tonight.

Mr. Gerry Barone, Executive Director of ESS stated thank you very much for having me. We put together a little presentation for ESS since we began. Thank you so much for having us in the District.

We started in Union Public Schools around November 14, 2016 so we started late in the year. You have to understand that once we do these programs, we typically work with districts as early as April so this was way behind. The District, the school principals and the administration has done so much to make us feel welcome in the building in a very quick amount of time. The vision was to bring the psychiatric expertise. Again remember what we are talking about, we are talking about kids with serious psychiatric illness that you need to dig down to find out what are the core elements of what is going on with them.

A school can manage kids really well. Let's say middle school, great principals, great case managers, but if you are not getting to the medication issues, counseling issues, the kids ultimately have, what happens when you get to the high school, pop they are out of district. They have a major psychiatric blow up and they are hospitalized or something like that. Having a program at the middle school level is very important. Remember we are only treating the most serious psychiatric kids in the building.

Currently there are a number of students that have been placed out of District. Like many of the districts that we go into, millions of dollars are spent on out-of-district placements. Typically somewhere between \$85,000-\$100,000 per student; the idea is to return students to the District and prevent students from going out.

2015-2016 – this is an aggregate number that ESS treated 888 students this year and this year we will treat about 1500 students. Of those 2.75 went out or only 24 students. All the districts we are in are typical just like Union, we are not cherry picking the students. They are giving us the most difficult students.

In addition 41 students were returned from out of district. Another piece of data that we look at is how many students returned from out-of-district placement and how many of those students went back out. Obviously, a valuable thing to look at and of those 41 students only two students went out. We hope to have the same success here so 5%.

Disciplinary issues – this is for the students that we treated last year. 74% went down, 50% went down as to absences and GPA went up by 33%.

We are working with the highest psychiatric students in the building. Some of the kids have really struggled prior to us getting there. School is still operating much the way it did before we got there; we are just doing the counseling piece right now. Over time, things should change. ESS is currently working with 14 students who are potentially at risk for going out of District. Of the 14 students that we treated, none have been referred out of district. That is why

we are there. On February 8th we will be evaluating our first potential student who is returning from out-of-district placement.

Mrs. Conti stated it is important to remember that 50% of the students that have been referred and treated by ESS have only been in the program for 60-90 days. About a quarter of them have been in the program for about 30-60 days and then the number decreases from there. For example, 6% of the students have been in the program for less than 30 days, even under five days. I spoke with Mr. Salvatore briefly, they have seen four students with great improvements in the academic area and performance and it is important to hear that because most of these students have been in the program for a short amount of time.

Mr. Barone stated it is tough work every day chasing around students and working with difficult parents but it is working so far. The next piece of data is about 88% of the students that were referred to us started treatment. It is a really good number. Let's say 30% and that would be bad because they would mean that parents met with us and the student met with us and said I don't want a piece of this. This shows that the administration, case managers can pick the right students for us but also that we were able to engage the parents and they were able to say yes I want this, it will be good for my kid.

School avoidance protocols are in place – one of the other things that we do is go out to students' homes and we call this a good ground game. We are not in the office trying to do magical psychiatric work. We know we you have to go to a family's house, do certain interventions and when you are working with school avoidance students, you are doing as much work with the parents as you are doing with the students themselves.

Mrs. Conti stated speaking with the case managers in the building and the Child Study Team, they said this has been very important piece for ESS because they are able to get into the home. Although the case managers have gone and done home visits, it is very time consuming and you have to spend a lot of time working with students with school avoidance and that has taken an extra pressure from the CST so they can donate time to other aspects. Although initially upfront, it takes more for them to prepare and plan to pick the right students but once they are in ESS, they have been a terrific asset especially with school avoidance and referring out to different agencies and outside community agencies and working with the parents right in the home setting and that is very important.

Mr. Barone stated we take a dialectical approach with parents, which means that two things that are opposite can happen so I can be really anxious and not want to go to school or I could be really anxious and I can go to school. We use a lot of that DVT and CVT in treatment itself but we also use it when we are working with parents.

The basic clinical regiment that students are getting every single day is group therapy, individual, family, parents support group, parent newsletter, "Not my Child" which talks about substance abuse which is more geared for high school, parents support group, parents newsletter and crisis intervention when needed. Understand that we just started the school year and our groups don't start until later in the day because of the schedule themselves so we have a lot of

scurrying around early in the day and have contact with the students and hopefully we will change that next year.

Weekly administrative meetings are essential. We meet the principal, vice principal, supervisor of special services, case managers to discuss students in the program development and we also meet with counseling staff, guidance staff and also with the SAC. These meetings are essential for continuity.

Fourteen students are currently in the program and of the 14 that we are treating, none have gone out of district and none have gone out to a home instruction. That is another pile of students that could go out.

Urgent sessions is something that we look at – how many have we done in addition to the family and individual sessions during the course of the last 3-5 weeks.

Ray Salvatore, Mr. Harrell and Ms. Drayton are magical people as far as I'm concerned. They are powerful, connected to the kids, they are so welcoming to the ESS staff and making us feel like we are part of things. You cannot be a success without having a success from the top down.

In addition the Director of Special Services, Kim Conti, and the case managers are very focused on trying to get students back from out-of-district placement. You have to pick the right students and make sure that the students that are in out of district are doing well and they are ready for a return.

Getting everything out of us as possible, we did a whole lot of speaking here much more so then any other district we are in.

Kim Conti stated I certainly was not going to let Mr. Barone off easy because when he made his pitch to us in the beginning, I'm very interested in the professional development and spreading that throughout the District from teachers and aides and then it would have that spill over affect to parents and students and we would be able to reach more and more. One of the feedbacks from the elementary because they have an advisory committee that they wanted presentations on behavioral support and I'm going to go back to them and say that ESS is prepared to present to them.

Mr. Barone stated just a few things that have been shared by my staff to me – this is going on: chronic school refuser who came to the school every day from 1/19 to 2/3; 12 school days in a row – that is the longest stretch he has had present to the entire school year; he was out yesterday but with a doctor's note and the mother promptly informed the office and the absence was excused and he was back in school again today. We know that school avoidance students can turn into homebound students and homebound students can turn to out-of-district students. For less than one week another student her clinician identified serious psychiatric issues and that student is now being taken care of and the mother states she is a single parent with no support and reported positively feeling that she is connected to the school. Received positive feedback from four teachers regarding four different students; all who have noted improvement in

behavior and classroom functioning. Another student historically responds to conflict physically walked away from a provocation recently. She has not had any behavioral incidents at school since November and she was selected to take a national assessment which her English teacher explained is an accomplishment. Lastly, multiple students who previously had difficulty engaging in treatment had opened up and that is really the beginning of this. Parents coming in and thinking this is a good idea.

Mrs. Conti stated lastly they are going to meet with Mr. Salvatore on a monthly basis to really take a look at the attendance, how the kids are doing with grades and discipline referrals to get even more data in addition to what their progress is towards their goals and objectives to the IEP. Thank you. ESS presentation appended to minutes.

Mr. Nufrio stated you indicated earlier about home visits. Is that done by a single individual or do you go in pairs? Mr. Barone stated always pairs. Mr. Nufrio asked have you ever had any issue where it became a high risk visit or something that you experienced that deterred you from going back and I don't mean just this District. Mr. Barone stated no we have never had an incident that was brought to that level but we always make sure that a parent is there in advance. We include parents because they are part of the solution so they know we will be coming to the house. There always has to be a parent there. We never go anywhere but the living room or the main area. We are serious about school avoidance and getting kids in but we are not so serious that we will find ourselves in kids bedrooms and crazy places like that.

Mr. Nufrio stated the liability factor and when you are in the buildings here the Board is liable for anything that should occur. Do you carry own liability when it comes to home visits. Mr. Barone stated of course; \$1 million per staff member.

Mr. Tatum stated if you will recall, this is something that came a little later and February is the time we start to benchmark and take a look at where we are. We invited them back for that purpose. What I am expecting to find at the end of the year is that we have some hard data on the actual success on those students that would have gone and were returned and what kind of cost savings. Contingent upon this program continuing, we need some hard facts that it is really effective. Hopefully we will be able to house students in the District with programs that meet the needs of our students.

Mr. Monge stated we said this very early on, it is like an economic development project – it is jobs created and retained. People are very critical of the retained aspect and very hard to make that argument. What Mr. Tatum is speaking to is the opportunity to bring the kids back. Obviously keeping them here initially is a great thing but bringing the kids back is where you going to make that feasibility argument.

Mr. Tatum stated we talk about trying to provide programs that support the curriculum on the extension of the curriculum.

We are going to talk about some of the programs that are planned for this summer. I am proud to say many of them are being funded by our local budget and some by Title I. Some programs are returning and some are new for the summer.

Mr. Benaquista stated our District will be open July. There is stuff at every building. Mr. Tatum stated the bridging programs – these are new this year but they are really transitional programs. One of the things that we have had a lot of discussion about is when students leave a particular school and move onto their next level in the District that those transitions are very difficult. A lot of research speaks to that and although Mrs. Moses refers to this as bridging programs, one of the most difficult transitions is the transition from grade 8 to 9 and that has been proven by statistics and all kinds of studies support that.

What we are trying to do is look at the years that our students transition and develop programs during the summer time that speaks to their readiness for the new experience they will encounter in September. We will have some technology classes from K-2, keyboarding and word processing between June 26 and 29th and we will continue with the i-Ready program for grades 2 through 5. When we get to the bridging programs, grade 4 to 5, reading, writing and mathematics will be for three weeks between July 10 and July 27, Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. for a 4-hour session. For a total of one class of 25 students.

Same things with grades 5-6 – same skills, reading, writing and mathematics – same time period and held at Kawameeh Middle School. The other one was Hannah Caldwell Elementary School. Then the bridge program grades 6-7 is going to be reading, writing and mathematics and also will be for a 3-week period, same time period.

Grades 7-8 program will follow the same type of schedule and again that will be three weeks from July 10th to 27th and again a 4-hour session and held at Kawameeh and a bridge program for grades 8-9 – introduction to algebra concept, which is an area we know that we need some additional support in. Again a 3-week program for grades 8-12 – four hours a day at Union High School.

We will have Camp Invention this summer and that will be during the month of August. Grades 1-6, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for first two weeks of August.

The Title I programs will be in place during the summer as well at the Title I buildings – Franklin, Jefferson, Burnet, Union High School and Battle Hill will have the special services program which is July 3-31st. Lastly the summer programs and how are they funded. The Title I programs are funded through Title I at Franklin, Jefferson and Burnet. Union High School summer school program is funded by the District budget. The ESY program is funded by the District budget and the summer tech i-Ready which we put in last year is also funded by the District budget and Camp Invention is paid for by parents and guardians. That is the only program that we offer that the parents have to pay to be a part of it.

Mr. Monge asked how does it potentially speak to kids in honors classes and also kids with IEP's? Mr. Tatum stated the programs that we designed, a student with an IEP can certainly go but the one program, the extended year, that is all IEP based. All the programs are for all the students in the District. Some programs are really independent and some will be online.

Mr. Benaquista stated a lot of the bridge programs, it is going to be a blended learning so it will have an online component which is really going to meet the students where they are at. It is to reinforce and get them working over the summer and to continue their learning and knowledge so that they don't fall behind or forget and to continue with the curriculum and reinforce and move forward but at the same time it won't allow them to move forward unless their mastering their standards. It is great individually and you have the support of the teachers too that can help the students as well.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked how does that work for the special needs population that does not have a 12-month program and who wants to go to the summer school program but don't have access to a para or TA? Mr. Tatum stated I think on a case-by-case basis, those issues can certainly be addressed. When you have a student that attends a program and they need those attributes, special services can certainly provide them. It really isn't an issue at all. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated so it will be amended. Mr. Tatum stated yes. Let's talk about the bridge program, regardless to whether or not you are a special needs student, you are an accelerated student, those issues that students encounter in terms of transition don't necessarily relax themselves because of their particular level of intelligence or their level of needs. All children have difficulty with transition regardless of what their concerns are and when we talk about putting together this program. This is the make or break point and that is where we can lose students some advance students regress and you talk about achievement loss and one thing about that is some students who make the transition very quickly will regain whatever they lost early but some students start to fall behind and never regain that – they continue to regress and that is why we are taking a look at that as well. I have taken a look at grades 8 and 9, as part of my dissertation and we do have a population of students that fail courses in 9th grade in this District and that is something we are working on because there is a need there.

Mrs. Minneci asked are they required to go? Mr. Tatum stated no, these are all optional programs. One of the problems we have is for a number of years we weren't offering too much of anything and only Title I and the ESY program. What we are trying to do is to expand opportunities for students during the summer time, but if we are going to expand opportunities, they have to be meaningful opportunities not just something to say we have something but something that is based upon something. We know we have issues in algebra and we know that is a course that all students need to pass. We want to try to emphasize those things now and make it a part of the summer program in preparation of the regular school year.

Mr. Benaquista stated we have changed a lot of things with the Title I programs. We sent out more surveys to find out why students weren't doing and we are doing more parent meetings right now. One of our coordinators just sent me a text over the weekend that they had a Title I family fun night. It is about getting the parents involved so they know what we are offering and that was through a recommendation with meeting people from the State. They wanted us to change some things and we are responding. Transportation is another issue with Title I. We are trying to meet the demands of the parents and guardians so this way we get more parent involvement through our Title I programs as well.

Mr. Tatum stated one of the things that we are looking very closely out and it ties into the budgeting area is how we can we utilize Title I funds in terms of programs and staffing because

what we find here is a lot of things that we are doing locally, some of that could be supported by Title I dollars and some of our program can be paid almost in full. We have the people coming in from the State on February 22nd and we are going to get some guidelines on how to better reallocate those funds. We probably haven't done the best job over the last 5-10 years of utilizing those funds. Reducing the amount of dollars that we can spend locally will only enhance our programs more at the local level and also using that money to support those students who need that additional push. Mr. Benaquista stated they are also recognizing how hard it is because it has been so specific on how you have to spend the funds that they are changing it as well to make it a little more flexible to spend the money as well as they are adding in the social and emotional side of it. We are going to be getting a percentage to go towards that which can be used in a lot of different areas.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated if we can look into some kind of social/emotional curriculum like Massachusetts and Illinois. They adapted this new social/emotional piece which is so intense right now and I think we need to use some kind of Title I funds. Mr. Tatum stated we have the social/emotional coordinator right here. We have been talking to Ms. Hall and she is going to be at the forefront of that piece.

One point on the curriculum piece – one curriculum that we will be updating this year and I think some people will be happy to hear this. Our gifted and talented curriculum – grades K-8 is going to be revamped this year. I think it is something that is long overdue. There has been a lot of issues in terms of how that all connects to those pieces that connect from one level to the next. We will get the 8th grade done and the accelerated program that is in the high school and middle school and hopefully we will have something that is coherent piece of documentation that supports what we do. We will continue with the unit planning. We are going to be following the 3-year curriculum cycle for those areas that need to be refined and updated with the standards and there are changes that have been coming and we also have to be prepared for those as well. They went from “no child left behind” to now it's called “every child succeeds” so we continue to get that information. We have to make sure we are staying on the cycles and bring in those things that are mandated.

Mr. Benaquista stated I know Mrs. Moses spoke at Board meetings about curriculum. We are updating our curriculum guides, math, English, language arts, science, social studies, kindergarten through grade 12. Mr. Tatum mentioned the gifted and talented program. We are going to be updating kindergarten through grade 8. We using the curricular framework to provide logical, rigorous, yet flexible path to meet instruction goals for all students.

We are making connections to the 21st Century skills, modifying for special education, ELL learners, gifted students, student at risk. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated ENL, English as a new language. Mr. Benaquista stated students at risk for failure, creating opportunities for every student to meet academic success and the unit plans. We are also looking at something new – Union High School/Middle School mathematics program and supplemental ELA materials to enhance the ELA program. Implementing the generation science standards (NGSS) stem activities K-5 for 17-18. Bringing on a Union High School math and computer science class – that is a new class. Mr. Monge asked is that the AP one? Mr. Tatum stated we can double check on that. Dr. Cohen mentioned at Kean that was a new course he was putting in. He didn't

specify whether it would be AP or not. Mr. Monge stated Mrs. Moses said, and I think you were on the email, that was something we were going to try to incorporate. Mr. Tatum stated that may be an extension but we will clarify that.

Mr. Benaquista stated the integration of technology, desktops, i-Pads, Chrome Books, Mac Books, etc. to support instruction and dive deeper into the curriculum guide via research based learning and project based learning and also that blended learning. Professional development workshops dealing with the framework. February 23, 2017 we have someone from the State, the Acting Chief Intervention Officer for the New Jersey Department of Education coming to present on the frameworks for us.

We are constantly trying to move the curriculum forward. Mrs. Regis-Darby asked what curriculum is she presenting on? Mr. Benaquista stated curricular. We are continuing to move forward and get it up to date and tied to the curricular framework.

Mr. Monge stated when we have those presentations I'm assuming they are very similar to the ones that we did with the math. If we can let parents know when it is going to happen and think about that and two as far as what else is happening at the same time. Mr. Tatum stated this particular one is staff. However, that doesn't mean we can't take information and turnkey it and bring something forward to the parents. Mr. Monge stated I think you should. Mr. Tatum stated or maybe bring the person back if that is possible. If we implement something or enhance something parents don't have a full understanding what we are doing and unfortunately we get to a Board meeting and we're asked why are you changing all this stuff. So point well taken.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated with the curriculum I know you just mentioned a new ELA program, I just want to say when you look into these programs make sure you are embodying our parents because a lot of the programs now do have the programs in different languages and I think that is a big thing according to the survey that the parents need so they can help the kids and I think when you get the curriculum in it must have that balance.

Mr. Nufrio asked Mr. Brennan, how comfortable are we with Title I funding given the fact they we will have a new secretary of education? It is going to directly impact the new innovative and extra special programs that we are going to present because one thing you don't want to do with education is dangle that carrot stick and then have someone rip it out of your hand. Mr. Tatum stated we have had that done here before. Mr. Nufrio asked how comfortable are we for at least the next year? Mr. Brennan stated that is hard to say. Mr. Tatum stated I think right now without there being any real change, we are very comfortable. Mr. Benaquista stated that the last meeting Mrs. Moses and myself were at, that question did come up and they said things can change and New Jersey is only getting this amount but the preliminary information they are getting is that it isn't going to change but it doesn't mean the following year is not going to. What we are going to get they feel is the same for next year but the year after that is when you might see things change if they are going to. They said to us you are pretty much good for the following year but again the Federal government could change. Nothing is 100%.

Mr. Tatum stated right now I think we are in good shape as far as we planned for the things we want to do. The other thing is we have been fortunate enough that over the summer we actually received our carryover funds that were frozen last year because of the way Title I was being operated in the District and that was a substantial number. Mr. Nufrio asked is it going to offset next year's allocation? Mr. Tatum stated I don't think so because it is a full carryover. Mr. Benaquista stated they were holding the funds from us. Mr. Brennan stated it was in the audit and it should not have been. Mr. Benaquista stated that was part of a meeting I went to over the summer where they wanted us to respond to how they were done in the past and that is when Mr. Tatum stated go down there and I went down there with Ms. Guilfoyle. We listened to them and we said we will make sure we follow your recommendations and there were some things they wanted us to change. Transportation was one of them. They were very upset that we weren't offering transportation for afterschool programs. They wanted us to find out what the problems were and why we weren't getting students there. They wanted to see parent input. We have been doing surveys and more parent meetings. I have been sending them out in the community because that was a recommendation. I feel comfortable that they will be very satisfied plus the one gentleman from the State that we are going to talk to about how we can become more of a district so that funds can be used districtwide instead of just in these schools. Mr. Tatum stated that will be huge if we can accomplish that. Mr. Benaquista stated there is some criteria to it but he feels that we have to apply for it and it is an extensive application but if we are able and we meet the criteria, the funds would obviously and that could then support any program, even your AP honors programs. The State is really changing a lot and the more information we get the better it is for us and that is one of the things that we will be discussing later this month with the people from the State.

Mr. Tatum stated the Kean update – a quick overview of what happened on February 2nd – we met with Mr. Mobley, Dean Pitman, Dr. Shearson, myself, Mr. Benaquista, Dr. Cohen and Mrs. Moran. We had a very productive dialogue with them about the education program at Kean. We were talking about trying to forge a relationship where we are able use some of their facilities. Use their STEM program and they will continue to provide us with student teachers in the District. Many of the teachers that we hire we are able to get the first shot from Kean. They have many districts reaching out to them because there are critical shortages in math and science, especially in physics and I believe Gerry has done recruitment there as well. Gerry had a great idea in terms of using our substitute teachers – being able to bring substitutes into the District via him doing an actual visit to the college as a career thing and try to recruit those students as they get themselves prepared and get use to our District and prepare for their careers.

The other thing that I want to highlight at this meeting is something that came up a couple of years ago. We were talking about the early release program. The question that came up was early release to what and where. One of the things that we found out, we have one student at Union County College right now. There is a college program out there we can have our seniors go to these local colleges and start college level courses on their additional time. We are going to have another meeting with Dean Pitman to talk about that piece and I think between Union County, Kean, Bed Bath & Beyond Corporation and some of the other corporations that we are working with and the Chamber of Commerce which I know we will hear a little bit more about because we have a reception coming up with them on March 15th. Dave, I know you are aware of that. We will be able to tell parents if your child is going to be involved in an early

release program from the District here are the opportunities that they have. We will continue to build and grow on that. I thought the idea of being able to have students go to a university and take advantage of some of the resources that they have available as well as those who are on the accelerated end, to take some college level courses. I think it is a powerful thing. Dean Pitman could see by the expression on my face that it was something that we really want to pursue more. I thought it was a good point to bring out tonight that we are trying to forge that type of relationship with the colleges again.

I know Annie presented this to some of you before about the clinical faculty coming to the District. I know that program. I have actually gone out to Rahway some years ago and it is also in Hillside and I know people that work in that program. What you are benefitting from there is you are bringing a college level professor along with students to work collaboratively with our teachers and our program. We are receiving the most updated methodology and you have the professors who actually do the instruction. We will be getting more information on that as well. Hopefully get that off the ground for September if at all possible.

There were many other things that we talked about throughout the meeting but those are the main highlights. Mr. Benaquista stated it was a very productive meeting. A lot of ideas came to the table. I threw out the substitute thing with them and me going there and getting people to sign up as a sub and do almost a job fair on Kean's campus but not just education majors, it can be anyone. If they have one day free from college classes, obviously they have to have 60 college credits, and if we can get them to sub for us for one day but we sign up many people, right now we are short on substitutes. It is another avenue for education majors to get experience. It can benefit both of us. For them, it may be getting them a job a day during the week.

I think it was a lot of energy on both sides and we are looking to further that conversation about the clinical side of it. If their professors are able to be in our buildings it is going to benefit not only our students, our staff, the Kean teacher, but it is going to help across the board. Mr. Tatum stated they spoke about the teacher academy as well. Doing something with the current students and having a college education day where some of our students who are interested in teaching can actually go and spend a day at Kean and get a feel for the college level. Mr. Benaquista stated it is obviously an excused absence.

Mr. Nufrio asked what are we doing in the way of addressing the third component of kids – vocational. I'm not hearing anything in augmenting that curriculum and those programs. I certainly hope that is not being put aside and I certainly don't think it is but are we doing anything to augment, improve, offer additional. We started something a couple of years ago. Mr. Tatum stated the welding program that was in the District. Mr. Nufrio asked is there a continuance of that? Not all kids are going to go to college. Mr. Tatum stated that may be an area that we can take a closer look. Right now I am summarizing the meeting that we had with the college which is more academics. Vito that can be a component of an early release program if we do have it - on the vocational end could be internships, those kids that may want to do a hands on approach because we are having a program with the Chamber of Commerce and that might be a good time to bring that point to the forefront. We have an vocational ed program with Union County right now. We do have students that attend that program but to expand it might be

valuable in terms of looking at these additional internships. Mr. Nufrio stated most vocational programs have a component where in the afternoon the students went off site. Mr. Tatum stated we still have that program at the high school.

Mrs. Minneci stated I came from a vocational school – where they get the basics before they can go out into an area. Mr. Tatum stated in terms of the program that we currently have right now, that program is one of those site programs. In terms of the actual vocational programs, I don't know if we have anything that is an applied program unless it is done through the County Vocational School. That is something we can look into. Mrs. Minneci stated I'm sure we have the computer programs and all that. Mr. Tatum stated it is certainly something to look into it. What I think Nancy is asking about is not necessarily programs but more so expanding careers for students and whether or not we are doing anything in the vocational area. I got excited about this program in particular because this was something we were talking about and trying to take advantage of and this is a separate entity all together. The point about the vocational piece is well taken and certainly we can look more closely. When we get to that March 15th, I don't know what businesses will be represented. We are working with different people to get there. We are doing an awful lot in this District. I'm going to brag a little bit tonight. A lot more than has been in a long and I'm proud of those things. We are certainly not opposed to doing more. So thank you Vito. The more ideas that come to the table, the more we have to work with.

Mr. McDowell stated I'm really glad that we are working with Kean because they are right in the neighborhood.

Mr. Benaquista stated to Vito's point, we do have Lincoln Tech down the street and maybe we can reach out to them. I use to deal with Mr. Oliver at the high school and if Mr. Tatum wants I can reach out to him and see what we can come up there as well.

Mr. Tatum stated I am happy that we are getting something off the ground. We have been talking about this for a while. Mrs. Minneci your background will certainly be helpful as well. There may be some resources you can point to and that would be helpful.

Mr. Benaquista stated the grant committee – we did recognize the Ed Foundation winners last month at the regular session. Thank you for that. The Ed Foundation is always providing our teachers with grants.

There are a lot of grants out there, it really comes down to getting the people to have the time and this is the hurdle that we are facing right now. We have a lot of people that are enthusiastic and most of them putting in the time is on their own time which are trying to benefit their students. I was looking on one site you can put in New Jersey and what type of grant you want and it will spit out all the grants and applications that are there and you can apply.

The problem really comes down to time. It is not an easy process. Mr. Harrell has written many of them and he can attest to how long it takes to write one. This is the biggest hurdle and people get bogged down with everything else that they don't have enough time to follow through. I need to come up with some things that I can propose to Mr. Tatum and bring it

back to you guys to try to maybe get creative and try to figure out with our in-house employees and get money for the District but also alleviate and create more time for employees that are interested and really spending quality time during the day and just allocate towards writing grants.

Mr. Tatum stated Mr. Harrell and I had a conversation last week and we are also keeping an eye on the opportunity for the 21st Century Grant again this year. It is March 1st. Mrs. Minneci said it is due. Mr. Tatum stated I didn't even know it was out. We have a plan, let's get the application going. Mrs. Zuena stated it is due March 1st and it is already February 7th. Mr. Harrell stated with a March 1st deadline, we would have to start writing in December at the latest. Mr. Tatum stated we will miss it because I thought we had more time on it.

Mr. Benaquista stated there are a lot of grants that you have to be a 501(c)(3) organization and that is where we want to start talking to the Ed Foundation and say if we can get teachers to write this, it will end up coming back to our students and that is a whole other avenue of grants. But it comes down to people having the time to spend because we don't have a grant writer that can spend their whole day writing grants. If that is something we bring to the table, to hire a grant writer that writes grants for our District, there is a lot of money out there. We are trying to make it work right now. We have had people apply for different things and we have gotten some but obviously not as much as we liked. The conversation needs to grow and we need to find other ways we can get people more time to write the grants or talk to personnel and see if we want to go with bringing someone in to write grants all the time as well.

Mr. Monge stated I know I was one of the people that said you have to hire somebody. Even if it is not a full-time person – I know we were looking at someone from the outside coming in and helping out. I think you have to do that. Another thing I want to point out is – Kean University – one of the firms I worked with years ago in Harlem, there was a group out of Columbia University and it was a technical assistance groups. We basically coordinated with that group and they were able to assist us in writing. I think if you had somebody or even someone that coordinates, you can get some grad students to come in as part of this and be part of the grant writing. I know that you had classes that folks would take this on as part of a class project or maybe as a student doing a thesis project and helping build platform for grants. Mr. Tatum stated I will look into this. Mr. Monge stated I think it is something you should take a look at because I know it isn't a new model. It has been used many times.

Mr. Nufrio stated I'm sure there are professional services that are available too and we have to search them out. Even if it is not an individual, maybe Mrs. Paul can do some research on that as to what entities are out there that can actually address these things in a contractual manner. We are going to miss a deadline and that shouldn't be. Mr. Monge stated somebody has to be in charge and it should be a tickler that this grant is going to come out at this time. Mr. Tatum stated point well taken.

Mrs. Lipstein stated the Ed Foundation is a 501 and we know that we can apply for grants in different places and we just did that from the information we had gotten from Battle Hill music teachers. We applied for a grant from Investors to offset the funds and we just got the \$1,000 from them. What I did was I rewrote the grant that the teacher wrote. We can partner

with you if you find them and if they have grants that we can submit – the grants committee of the Ed Foundation can take a look at them and submit them. It is a very long process. (inaudible) They want a small report back, they want the bills. Mr. Tatum stated maybe it is something we can think about.

FISCAL AND PLANNING:

Mr. Brennan stated the reverse auction – we had one back in the fall for gas and Mr. Arminio sent me an email recently and I have been in contact with Energy Marketing which runs the auctions. Now we are going to run it for our electrical supply. For the gas we are projected to save \$56,000 over two years. Now with our electricity we are looking for some more savings. Jeff, you were part of that discussion back in the fall so I will keep you in the loop. The trigger resolution and they call it that because electric companies come in anonymously to a virtual room which is held on the internet and they bid against each other. The bids must fall within a certain range and that range will be in the resolution that you will approve on the 21st and then we will have the reverse auction on the 22nd of February.

If I don't like the results that we have and I will share that with the Fiscal Committee first, if we don't think we are saving enough money and we can do better, we can go out and do another reverse auction. We are looking to save money for the District and this is one of the ways we can do it.

An overview of our 17-18 budget building process – when I came on board back in August, Mr. Tatum and I sat down and he told me that the District is looking to build a new budget or go about building a new budget from zero for the District. A lot of times in the past and in previous districts that I come from, it was what was last year's allocation and let's just tack on a 2% increase and that's our budget. This year we are going with a zero-based and rebuild it using a 2% increase which on our tax levy which is \$85,000,000 amounts to \$1.7 million.

Our total budget is \$135,000,000. Districtwide budget – we wanted to include department heads, the principals, we wanted feedback and input from everyone in the District. Mr. Tatum and I sat down and said why don't we have them come with a 3-tiered approach where you have your absolute needs, then you might have some wants and then a wish list – a pie in the sky idea. It was very interesting to see that each department as they came through, we cycled through an hour with each department and it was interesting to see what their needs were, what they might want in the future, we may not be able to afford it this year, but it is in the back of our brains that they would like some of the things in the future and some of them were eye opening. One thing that came about and it is a necessity actually, with transportation, that we need a new bus lift. There are no safeties built into our bus lifts. That came about because of this process and otherwise we would never have known about it.

Presentations were given by each department head to the administration and the administration is Mr. Tatum, myself, Mr. Benaquista, Mrs. Moses and Mr. Vieira. We had buildings and grounds, transportation, special education, curriculum, personnel, technology and athletics.

New this year, the technology budget was school based. Now with Mrs. Paul, as Director of Technology, it is a Districtwide budget and that makes total sense because technology budget is created so that the hardware and software will be standardized throughout the District and that really simplifies and makes it easier for the support team to maintain and it allows Mrs. Paul to better service the District.

Budget discussions – the Superintendent met with each principal one-on-one and through those conversations he reallocated funds based upon school grade levels and their enrollment in each building.

Budget meetings – we have several of them, maybe one a week and that is revisiting the budget with Mr. Tatum, Mr. Vieira, Mr. Benaquista and Mrs. Moses and we go over and see the overall picture and where we are and where we have to cut. We have not had to make any cuts as far as programs; we are maintaining everything. It is good communication; we are all on the same page and we are collaboratively building this budget.

We looked at surplus because the auditor John Mooney had said in his presentation – we are carrying on average about \$5 million in surplus and it is peaks and valleys and he said that is not good. We want to stabilize that surplus and then ticking it down to more of a \$3 million mark but we can't do it all at once. If we do it all at once we are going to have an open whole with revenue for the following budget year. We have to creatively step that surplus down – maybe \$500,000 at a time. We can do that with the resolution that I talked to you about when the auditor came for his presentation in June. We can put that resolution together and say x-amount of dollars, not to exceed x-amount of dollars. The Board will allow the business office to move some of that money into capital reserve or maintenance reserve so that we will have that flexibility to control the surplus in the following school year.

Mr. Nufrio asked how comfortable would you be with that kind of low number? Mr. Brennan stated it would be a Board decision.

Mr. Monge stated the idea here is if you have a zero-based budget and we know what we need. Mr. Nufrio stated regardless of what budget you have, you still need reserve. Anything less than 2%? Mr. Brennan stated that is not less than 2%.

Mr. Monge stated the idea is that you have a budget, you stick to your budget but you actually have reserves separate and apart from the surpluses that we have been carrying. Historically we have been carrying a budget that builds in a \$5 million excess surplus. We have been budgeting like this forever. Outside of that we have various reserves that we have been carrying on top of that so that is what we are talking about doing. Mr. Brennan stated we have to be smart about this. We can't shoot ourselves in the foot and not have the money to spend.

Mr. Tatum stated we just had a review with the County Superintendent and Business Administrator and one of the things that they said and I heard this 10 years ago, you guys in Union County carry too much surplus and in 2010 this District lost \$9.1 million because we were carrying too much. Mr. Nufrio stated they were unexpended funds. Mr. Tatum stated that is

what these are unexpended funds. If you have this much money, then you are not getting any State aide. The next year they reduced us by \$6.4 million which totally we lost \$15 million in State aid and that is fact and it happened and we had to lay off a lot of people because of that. Right now we are lucky enough to maintain everyone we have.

Dr. Francis stated it's not fair to the taxpayers. Mr. Tatum stated you are absolutely right. One of the things that you will see moving forward is that we are trying to look at the areas where we are generating this money and reallocate it into the existing budget. Mr. Brennan stated Mr. Vieira and I did a little investigation and determined causes and reasons why certain accounts were over appropriated and adjustments were made using some of the surplus to redistribute that money and appropriate it to areas of greatest need throughout the budget and that was the whole purpose for building it from scratch.

Mr. Monge we are going to schedule budget workshops. I will come up with a powerpoint and we will schedule some time with Board members just to go through the timelines – budget preparation starts in July and it is a whole cycle throughout the whole year and once you are done with the budget, you start up for next year. I can send that powerpoint out and also schedule some time together.

February 14th we are going to discuss in Fiscal, a draft of the budget in more detail and then we can have questions and answers. Once we feel comfortable with that, then we can share with the rest of the Board.

February 28th is the Governor's budget message and within 48 hours of that budget message, the first day for release of State aid figures – this is an ongoing process so hopefully our State aid is flat or increased.

March 14th we will have the adoption of the tentative budget at our worksession meeting in March and Manny and I will submit on the 20th which is the deadline for the proposed budget to go to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools.

Mr. Tatum stated what was emphasized to us at the Superintendent's roundtable – that the 20th is the absolute drop dead deadline that we have to have it in their hands on that day and approved by the Board in order to submit otherwise we are in big trouble.

OPERATIONS:

Mr. Brennan stated under operations, I was going to talk about Long Range Facility Plans, we did approve EI at our last Board meeting. We set up as EI suggested for a kick off meeting for our Long Range Facility Plan and they want to meet with all the administrators and all the principals so Mr. Tatum and I coordinated that for the next principals' meeting which is February 23rd and we are going to meet at 12:30 and they are going to have the first hour. Mr. Tatum stated also present will be a State representative on the curriculum.

Capital Projects Manager – the job description was written up. Mr. Benaquista told me it is going to the Personnel Committee next Tuesday night and once we get approval on that we will go out and post for that position.

Barry Loessel stated the boilers at the high school – the hot water system is complete. One steam boiler is complete. The last boiler is being put together as we speak. They still have a due date of March 17th – that project should all be done.

The roof at Livingston School has been completed. It was inspected and the punchlist was done and that is complete.

Connecticut Farms – we are still working on. They have to do the inspection and then the punchlist.

Intercom System at Burnet should be done by next week and then we will have to do a walk through.

Lead water results – we are starting to get our lead water results in and they are not so bad. The schools – Hannah, Kawameeh, Washington, Administration Building and Jefferson – there are no problems there at all. Mr. Nufrio asked maybe at some point you can give all the Board members a copy of what you are reading from. I gave it to Operations but I will make more copies.

Right now there are no results in Jefferson, Hannah, Kawameeh, Washington. The high school had a 54 receptacles tested and 5 came back positive. Livingston school there was 29 tested and 3 came back positive. Battle Hill had 27 tested and 3 came back positive. Connecticut Farms had 24 tested and 7 came back positive. Franklin had 19 tested and 2 came back positive. Hamilton had 6 tested and one came back positive. Burnet Middle School had 35 tested and only one came back positive. We isolated all those water fountains and they weren't all water fountains, one sink in the nurses office and so we gave the nurse bottled water and told them they could only wash their hands out of there.

We have to go through the second water test now and that will tell us if there is lead in the actual line or the water fountain itself. We are waiting for the field house and once we get that they will come back and do the second test. We have two water fountains in one school and they are both the same and one says there is lead in it and one says there is not so it could be a false positive. We have to go for the second test to know if these are actual.

Mr. Monge stated you cut off those. Mr. Loessel stated all those that said they contain lead are shut down and nobody can drink out of them. Dr. Francis asked what are the levels? Mr. Loessel stated 15 parts per billion is the State level and most of them came back 21-25 so it is not really high so most likely it is right in the fountain itself. When the kids turn them on it flushes itself out so the levels usually get a lot lower. We are waiting for the second test and take appropriate action.

Mr. Monge asked is the second test – is there a time period. Mr. Loessel stated I'm waiting just for the field house and next week we should have the test being done and probably another week before we get the results back on the second test. Newark sent 170,000 water samples and they only can do 200 a day. Mr. Brennan stated all the labs are backed up.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated this was pro-active – us just saying we need to do this. Mr. Loessel stated no, the State mandated this. Mr. Tatum stated we did one before. Mr. Loessel stated we did an assessment on the water. We didn't do all the receptacles that they wanted to. We did a few here and there. It was just an assessment not what the State mandated. Any portable waters or drinking water or nurses office, where they drink water, all those receptacles need to be tested and now we have done that.

Mr. Nufrio asked are you applying for the rebates? Mr. Loessel stated Omega who we are working with, they are going to hand us the paperwork and we will just have to submit it with the questionnaire.

Mr. Monge stated just for the record. The assumption that the Board had is that we did testing for the whole district and that is what came back to us and then we found out after the fact that it was only five buildings. Mr. Loessel stated that is correct and they were only assessed because they only did 2-3 in each building. Mr. Brennan stated it wasn't State mandated at that point. Mr. Loessel stated July 7, 2016 it was mandated by the State.

We also started to put these signs up in the bathrooms – “non drinkable water”. It doesn't necessarily mean that those sinks have lead in them but the State mandated that we don't need to test them because they are usually used for washing hands so we don't have to test them. All the evidence is pointing that the water coming into the building doesn't contain lead but the water fountains we may have problems with those. We will certainly check that out.

I just got a letter from one of our architects and this is for the lighting at the high school. We are looking to go all LED up there. We are also going to change all the ceiling tile and update the fire alarm system. He also said with the State grants, we might be able to reduce that by half. Whatever the cost, the State will give us half of the money back. We might want to be interested in looking at all the schools because the State is going to send someone out to assess what you have out there to find out about the high efficiency stuff. If they come out and look at it, they might say you need some more stuff.

Mr. Monge stated Burnet, we did half a job there, that would be an easy one to throw in there. Mr. Loessel stated we will assess all the schools with the State when they come in to look at it and see what they say.

Mr. Arminio stated you may already know, there is a big rebate from the State on LED lights. Mr. Loessel stated yes, they have a rebate on the lights and they also have a program going too on top of the rebate, they will also pay for half of the projects. I'm looking to bring in solar companies to start looking at solar electricity for some of our buildings because we can have some savings on that. I am also talking to a company right now that is called Respond Demand – what they do during the summer time when the electric is used at its peak time, they

come in and put meters on your thing and they tell you to reduce your electric and if you can reduce it by a certain amount, they give you money back. In the summer, really nobody is here so we can probably meet that demand. There are a lot of things on the table to save the Board money.

Mr. Tatum stated the summer cleaning schedule ties in with education summer programs. The summer cleaning schedule is going to be designed around those programs that are going on so we can get the buildings cleaned and get them ready for the school year. I have to admit this before you ask Jeff, we haven't figured out that part yet but we are going to do one.

Mr. Nufrio stated some of the studies that I read on solar panels, you are paying a high per kilowatt cost and the return factor is minimal. Just do your due diligence.

Mr. Monge stated Mr. Nufrio is absolutely right. If you don't maximize the coverage than you never see the benefit and I don't think we have enough flat roofs throughout the District to be able to benefit from that. Mr. Loessel stated I have enough flat roofs, I have reports here. Mr. Monge stated my business hat, I do take credits and part of them are solar credits, I mentioned this about 1-1/2 years ago, I can totally bring in, if o.k. I'm not sure, someone to give their two cents and not trying to make money, as it pertains to that. I know that there is some back of the napkin as it pertains to how much coverage you really need in order to maximize that. The other thing is your roof – you put solar panels on old roofs and they are not responsible for that. So the ideal situation is when you put them on, you are putting them on new roofs otherwise you have your useful life of your roof is coming around the corner and then you are trying to maximize your solar panels and you actually have to remove your solar panels to put your new roof on.

Mr. Loessel stated the new ones they don't put them to the roof. They lay just on top. Mr. Monge stated same difference because you still have to remove in order to lay down a roof. It is something that we can talk about and I'm open to explore but once again, as Mr. Nufrio was saying, there is a lot of truth to that and it is something that we have to be diligent on. Mr. Loessel stated there are a lot of companies that give you the equipment for free.

PERSONNEL:

Mr. Tatum stated when we talked with the Personnel Committee about the possible addition of some part-time security at the elementary schools, one of the things that we are finding is that we started to get students especially in the special needs area, who are runners and we are looking at a way to revamp the existing positions that we have. We phased out like a greeter or someone leaves can be replaced with a part-time person and we can eventually work to see if we can bring them in full time but at least that is a start to address the elementary security.

We have an issue with traffic and we talked especially about Connecticut Farm Schools and some of the other buildings. During the construction period, we put a substitute security officer there and lucky for us it was when NBC News tried to get into the building and they stopped them at the driveway. We didn't dare tell the Today show that it was a substitute. We really need to addressing it more.

Mr. Benaquista stated as far as our personnel files. The amount that we have to keep in the personnel files is getting to the point where there is one room with all the filing cabinets and it really is getting to the point where we can't fit no more. I did speak to one company as far as going electronic with them – scanning the documents instead of saving paper. Moving forward they would come in and scan everything for us initially and get everything online and moving forward we would continue the scanning ourselves. They said they do have districts in New Jersey and the only thing I would want to confirm with Mr. Griggs legally we are good with everything as far as everything can be and how many areas it needs to be backed up and stuff like that.

Mr. Arminio asked what about all that stuff in Burnet's basement? Mr. Benaquista stated that first stage is just our current would be \$15,000 and obviously I did not have them look at our archives because that would be the next phase as far as backing those up. The ones in the basement at Burnet, if there is a flood down there, those files are going to be damaged.

Mr. Monge stated those are storage companies because the folks that scan also store. Mr. Benaquista stated this company called Docs to Disk – electronic document scanning and imaging projects. Mr. Monge stated I did this for a client and we got three quotes. I can actually give you some numbers that you can look at – it is a New York thing but I think those folks talk New York and New Jersey. Mr. Benaquista stated not right now but something we will have to think of moving forward to. If Mr. Griggs feels that legally we don't have to have a hard copy of anything, I think the main thing is having it backed up. Mr. Monge stated it is a very simple process. Mr. Brennan stated I can reach out to my previous district because they have been doing it for the past few years.

Mr. Tatum stated the one good thing is that it will save Mr. Benaquista those trips down to the basement at Burnet. We are happy that he has always returned. Hopefully we will get this done electronically and it won't be necessary for him to go down there.

We do have people come in and request a record and they have been gone for so long that you have to go to archives to find them or an agency might reach out to us for that information. It is more beneficial to have it at your fingertips.

Mr. Vieira left the meeting.

Public relations - Akua and Jen are here tonight. Akua Boakye stated I work at the high school. I have been teaching for 16 years here and I am also doing some public relations work here in Central Office.

Jennifer Williams stated I work here in Central Office and I choreograph all the musicals at the high school and I went to school here. Ms. Boakye and I are working together and we started in September on this public relations initiative and we are looking to continue to grow that initiative. I just want to talk to you about where we started, where we are now and where we are looking to go.

Ms. Boakye stated our general objective is to build public understanding and support for our school district. We want to find ways to increase positive public perception of our schools. As of right now, if you go on social media for those of you who follow the Union Forum Page – there are so many negative stories that are told about our schools and we feel that it is very important to find ways to increase the positive perception of our schools. We are also looking to improve organizational performance and communication and also community relations.

Ms. Williams stated we want to start by identifying our audience which includes parents, staff, local businesses, religious organizations, colleges, universities, students, sports leagues and our local government.

Ms. Boakye stated we are very much aware that communication is at the heart of our school set and community. We also recognize that when there is meaningful public engagement, it insights the communities involvement in education which benefits the students and eventually what that does it increases student achievement as well.

Ms. Williams stated to achieve all those goals we want to make sure we identify our weaknesses and strengths. What makes parents decide to enroll their children in our District, why do they sometimes pass over our schools for other educational opportunities and what is it that makes us unique. What is that one unique quality or several unique qualities that make Union tick, that make us a unique district and all the wonderful things that we do and have to offer that people don't necessarily know about. Where we started in terms of public relations is we got some coverage in local newspapers, we have our website which is a good way of communicating information to the community, as well as robo calls. Some basic ways that we can communicate and where we are hoping and starting to grow these ways of communicating with everybody and we are hoping to continue that.

Ms. Boakye stated so where are we going from here. Some of the things that we constantly think about is that we are looking for ways to try to come up with positive change. We came up what we call Union's three P's of publicity which consists of positivity, professionalism and perception.

Under positivity we are looking for ways to increase the number of positive stories that are provided to the community through all of these means of our media. We have social media, district website, hopefully a mobile app that we are working on with Mrs. Paul. We are also looking for different ways to show all of these wonderful qualities and all the wonderful things that are happening with our schools. At the top of our list we have technology, we are all aware of the ChromeBooks that are rolling out for the high school. This is excellent for us to let the community know because this is the way of really changing the teaching process.

We are also looking at all of the different college acceptances. A lot of our students are getting accepted into top schools in the nation and it is very important that we let the public know that. We are working as educators and our kids are getting accepted into some of these colleges.

We have an award winning theater department in the high school and hopefully all of you have had an opportunity to see one of the plays that is choreographed by Jennifer. Jennifer stated Cinderella opens March 31st.

Ms. Boakye stated obviously for sports we have a lot of our athletes who are competing on the State and national level. We have a lot of champions. You already know one of our students, Nick Zuena, and other students are doing well athletically. We know our students are performing not only in the classroom but on the field as well. A lot of charity work and volunteer work that our staff and students are doing; so many events and college nights, resource nights provided by the guidance department.

As far as community relations is concerned as mentioned earlier, we are doing a lot of work with the Chamber of Commerce. We are hosting March 15th event at the high school where we are going to focus on ways to try to get the community, particularly local businesses, to find ways to help the high school students stay employed. We are looking at possible internships, as mentioned before, the co-op program exists now but we don't have a lot of local businesses participating. We are trying to find ways to get local businesses to participate in a co-op program where they hire students from our schools to do work for them.

We are also looking at different activities. The main thing that we really want to focus on in the high school is the advanced curriculum that we have. Often times when I tell people I teach at the high school and I teach business and marketing and public relations and business ethics – they say you have that in high school? We do and we have a lot more classes – business law and advanced classes that a lot of people don't know about. We really want to highlight all of these classes that the general public do not know about.

Ms. Williams stated these are some of the things that we started to work on. We have a newsletter called "What's New with U". It is a District newsletter focused on sharing highlights and activities going on in the District. We started out with just a PDF format, quick pictures and little blurbs to get people excited about things that are happening and last month we introduced a new digital format which reads more like a magazine. We send them out via our emails. It flips through like a magazine and gives you highlights of all the great things that are happening.

We have a show called "Around the U" which aired last month. If you got to see it, the first episode featured Mr. Tatum. He was at Franklin School and he got a tour by three very enthusiastic young ladies and they took him around the school and they sat down and asked him questions and he asked them questions and they really loved it.

We did a creative custom segment where we featured the cast class at the high school. We were able to take a behind the scene look. When I watched the feedback, I was so impressed with what these kids are doing in class every day and it is stuff like that which makes it so interesting that we have those programs and we want to make sure we are sharing.

Coming up in the future we want to do an administrative roundtable where people sit with Mr. Benaquista, Mrs. Moses and educators sit around just like this and talking about

different topics and a variety of different things like District highlights and highlighting positive things that are going on and then each show ends with some words of wisdom from Mrs. Moses.

We had our first show air last month and we are working on the second one now. Mr. Monge asked is that available online? Ms. Williams stated yes. It airs on Channel 34 and it is also posted on their vmo page.

Mr. Nufrio stated I saw on one of your first slides the newspapers. I get the Suburban News and most of us probably do and very seldom do I see anything about Union. I'm tired of reading about Rahway. Ms. Williams stated unfortunately we do have the problem where the newspapers that are more County based focus more on Westfield and Rahway. Mr. Nufrio stated that can change. Ms. Williams stated of course. When we write a story, we email it to all of these sources. I have a relationship with these people. TAP and Spirit of Union publishes a lot, the Union Leader they just came back now with a monthly format where that is focused solely on Union. We are working towards building our relationships and getting more engaged with them.

We do email them out and we will talk about other ways we are hoping to get information out that will be much more effective and that will reach more people. Also we have a tab on our website for District news. It features galleries that we keep up, we keep our archived newsletters, we have an "In the U" section which features all the press that we have gotten as well as "Around the U" link to the show.

Ms. Boakye stated what you see here – these are all the links to the articles that we have published either online or in print media – so there is a lot. One of the main things that Jennifer and I came across when we were looking at the website for the District is we realized that a lot of the children that are featured on the websites for each school are not our kids. It is a template of random children. There is one teacher that works at every school. We decided that it would be a great idea to go to the different schools in the District and get pictures of our actual school students in the classrooms doing different activities and events. These are some pictures that we have taken. They are not on the site yet, we are editing some of them. We have kids from Burnet, Hannah Caldwell and we have gone to most of the schools. We have a couple more to go to. Our kids are beautiful and they are working and I rather have them on our website than have random kids that we don't know. I think it will be good for the parents to go to the site of the kids school and see the kids that they actually have.

The second piece that we are focusing on is professionalism within the District and with that we really started to look at communication at its most basic form. We started looking at the internal relations. We realized the first point of contact for most visitors and callers is the greeters and secretaries. It is extremely important that the interactions of the secretaries and greeters have with visitors is a positive one.

Just recently there was something on the Union Forum and there was something about a phone call that was placed to someone and they didn't get the best reception. It is extremely important when we talk about public relations and not just focus on what we are putting out but also what are we doing here inside when people come into visit. We sat in at a secretary's meeting that Julia had once a month and we spoke with the secretaries about their interactions

with visitors, their response time to phone calls and emails and just how we interact with each other when people are around. Often times parents walk into a building whether a school or here and it is very important for them to see that we communicate in a positive way with each other. That is something that we are working on as well.

Also office appearance is extremely important and you probably noticed when you walk into the Central Office there has been some changes happening, minor changes but it really does help. It makes it a little more welcoming when people come in. Ms. Williams stated people have a nice positive reaction when they come in.

Ms. Boakye stated we are hoping to put up a TV screen upfront so when parents come in or visitors come in, they get to see a replay of some of the activities that are happening in our schools and we are hoping to do this in the schools as well.

Moving forward we are looking for additional presence on Channel 34 and hopefully more programs and segments.

Ms. Williams stated we want to continue to refine the PR process with coordinating with the building principals to work on ways to promote their schools and continue to encourage District staff to send information regarding positive programs and activities and events to our email.

The key to our success and to help the school success is getting information. A lot of the times we are not necessarily getting information so it is harder for us. We have the resources here and as much information as we can get, the more information we can keep putting out. Ms. Boakye stated we are looking to replace the stock pictures of the students on the website with real photos. We are working with the Chamber of Commerce to expose students to different ideas and different ways of looking at different career options. At the high school I work with students who are constantly telling me what they might want to be when they grow up. They are not necessarily sure and we go over career clusters and things in business classes but I think it is a great idea for kids to actually have a day where they can go in and shadow somebody at work. Maybe do an internship, get that hands on experience or get to see somebody in the field of work that they are interested in. We are working with the Chambers on that.

I started a youth success program at the high school last year. It is an alumni program where we bring back Union High School alumni who are succeeding in whatever field of work that they are in. If you walk into the main lobby of the high school you will see a big poster board with three pictures – we usually feature three alumni a month – we have a picture of them, what year they graduated, a little blurb about them and some advice that they will give to the kids now at school. We are hoping to bring them in and speak.

Ms. Williams stated we spoke about taking all these photographs, we want to display them in our schools, we are talking about doing more of a display as people come into our building here and the TV as well. It is all about setting the stage for a welcoming environment. When you come here, I can control my attitude towards everyone and I always try to be as positive as I can and if they came in a little bit angry now, maybe they will be a little softer when

they get to Mr. Tatum or Mr. Benaquista or whoever they came to see. I think that is important. Our image is important as well and making sure that we are staying as positive as we can discussing our schools in all forms of media.

Ms. Boakye stated moving forward with some of the things that we want to do, we realize technology continues to grow, it is part of our lives and everyone is constantly on their phones, we are looking into a social media page. We don't have an official FaceBook page for the District yet but we are looking to start an official page. We want to create a page where we can go and put information that is coming directly from this office. A lot of times when something happens, especially if there is a crisis or emergency, people start to speculate in the District and then they go on FaceBook and if they are not getting their information fast. If we had a social media page and the information is coming directly from Central Office, we are able to put it on and see it and share the information and now they know it is fact and not a maybe because it came from the Township's page. We are working on that.

Ms. Williams stated FaceBook and all these things are such a blessing but they can be a killjoy but they are a total blessing because that is the best way to get information out quickly. When we have a great article we can pop it right on our FaceBook page. When we shot our TV show and when we put it on the internet, we can pop it right on there and people can share it and like it this way and we are building the community that way. We have been looking at FaceBook pages of a lot of districts and it is the way of the future right now and it is important that we can adapt to as well. It is very easy and as long as we are getting accurate important information and it is out there. The speculation and the gray areas are where things start to snowball and people get a little bit negative.

Ms. Boakye stated the key to success is all of you guys and everybody in the Township. Presentation appended to minutes.

TECHNOLOGY:

Mr. Tatum stated Sandra Paul tell us about when we are rolling out the ChromeBooks and then Mr. Harrell.

Mrs. Paul stated the ChromeBooks have been ordered and we are waiting for delivery. The ChromeBooks will be distributed during the week of February 15-21st for the high school between 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. so we will be distributing them according to class – freshman, sophomore, juniors and seniors. Mrs. Zuena stated the parents will be notified. Mrs. Paul stated the high school is working on a letter to send out to the parents to let them know what is going on. Mrs. Zuena stated what did they decide on the insurance. Mrs. Paul stated as far as the insurance, there is an agreement. Mrs. Zuena stated you make them buy insurance so you don't have to deal with that issue. As a parent, I would rather buy insurance rather than pay for it if you lose it. I don't mind paying a \$25 incident report but if it is lost I now have to pay for it but if I purchased insurance, it would be covered. That is something we should look into before we send that out. Mr. Monge stated what was that? She said there is a \$25 incident fee if something happens to it and if it is lost you have to pay for it; they are not offering an insurance program where if it is lost it is covered. I think they have to offer that.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Harrell stated I will make this quick so if any questions come up, you can ask me. I will start with the plus and minuses of the Academy program that we started on January 11th. We have had some administrative sessions with the team which is really good – teachers from Kawameeh and Burnet. The data that you see here and one of the things that we didn't do when we had Academy back in the day is we didn't give any hard data and because I am a science person, I am only interested in truthful relevance and being informative and clear and data points. One of the big things that we tried to enforce in Academy is efficient evidence based writing. I gave you two bar graphs – one from Kawameeh and one from Burnet.

Let me talk about the plus/minuses first before I tell you what those bars mean. Some of the strong points that I feel about the Academy is the collaboration with the mentors from the high school. One of the things that I placed in – Ms. Hall and I created rope, the academy program at the high school a couple of years back so I wanted to incorporate that idea of bringing the high school kids over to Burnet and Kawameeh because they get out of school earlier and by the time we have the middle school start, they are there, they are impactful, they basically run the program. All the kids from the high school that are mentors, they run the program for 6th, 7th and 8th grades which makes the teacher's job quite easy when they are teaching because the high school students pretty much run the thing. I am at Burnet on Wednesdays, Kawameeh on Friday and I teach a master class both days and pull questions along with my mentors from the high school. That is a huge plus for me. Another huge plus for the Academy program is the consistent writing with the rubric that is based on PARCC, language arts, and the next generation science standards. Of course, we combine the next generation science standards rubric with the PARCC rubric. I am a science person, Maureen Guilfoyle hired me, I'm clearly going to set up for really good writing and I want the kids in this program to be very grade efficient and consistent in writing.

We have been in this program for less than a month and when I see a binder full of one page narratives from both Burnet and Kawameeh, it is really a wonderful thing to see. That bar graph tells you how we scored in the group of kids from Burnet and Kawameeh. Another great part of this program is I opted out of newspapers because I don't waste District money so instead of paying the \$2400 for the New York Times, we decided to spend that money on ChromeBooks – 5 for Burnet and 5 for Kawameeh. Of course this is a collaborative group of students that work. There are 5-7 people on each team and they share the ChromeBooks to get information and to write their rebuttal within the hour because they have real time resources right there online to get it which I think is phenomenal because the kids are thinking on their feet, they are analyzing what people say, they have to listen, they have to write something and then they have to speak. For me it is a win-win.

Another wonderful part is we have all the students in Burnet and Kawameeh fully engaged in Google Docs already. There are teachers in the District who don't know how to do Google Docs yet, but that is not a slight, the students are already using Google Docs, submitting everything through Google Docs. It is a District initiative anyway. What a great place to be

when you do it with a pilot group of kids that are enforcing what we all haven't enforced as of yet.

We have two donations that we haven't accepted. They want to give us money but I sent an email saying we can't take it because I don't know how to take it. That is out there and we found that impressive because they found us we didn't go looking for them. One wants to give us \$2,000 towards our trip, another one wants to give us another \$500 to do whatever we want with it. I want more ChromeBooks because if this program expands into September that would be really nice and then I wouldn't have to go to Mrs. Paul for extra ChromeBooks. Mr. Tatum stated you have the money don't worry about that. Mr. Harrell stated that is wonderful. The idea that kids are working together from that social/emotional standpoint, working in collaborative groups, we bring this up in administrative sessions all the time. It is another wonderful thing to see kids growing this way and the consistent collaboration.

Dr. Claudine King from Stockton University and her staff have been the brain child all the way down in south Jersey in giving us pretty much anything we want. We are going to put in a proposal to overnight at Stockton University. They are paying for all of our boarding, security and the only thing we have to pay is \$10 for food for each child. I have that in my budget. They are giving us anything we want. They are sending staff down starting in March. They are willing to meet with Mr. Benaquista to expand the entire scope of how we have written this curriculum. They love it. They want to expand to the high school. Four schools in the area of New Jersey have called us and said middle schools and high schools stating hey can we have a visit and look at your program. I told them I have to get back to you on that because I don't know if we want someone to take our intellectual property for free. I'll get the permission to get that done if we can actually invite them in.

Some of the minuses I believe, we only have two special need students at Burnet and those two special needs students – 2 out of 60 – we don't think that is enough so clearly there has to be a concerted effort if this program is adopted in September to reach out in a way that is going to be complementary and accommodating for everyone. Although we invited everyone to apply, I didn't use all my charm as I could have to bring in special needs kids in.

Another thing if you look at the bars, the 6th graders – it is a very popular program for 7th and 8th graders; we have a small amount of students at Kawameeh Middle School and at Burnet. Even with the large group that we have there, there is only 6 students – 6th graders. There clearly has to be an articulation if this program is adopted in September to send some scouts down to elementary schools – I always think students are the best to sell programs because they actual did it. Sometime in June before school ends – this way the 5th graders are excited about possibly joining this program in September so it would solve the problem of 6th graders coming in.

Mr. Arminio asked Mr. Tatum can we get advanced permission to visit one of the sessions in the morning? Mr. Tatum stated absolutely but in the afternoon. One of the things that Mr. Harrell and I spoke about in the planning stage, so the entire Board knows, I asked him to come up with some kind of culmination that would be put on maybe on a Saturday afternoon so that parents would have an opportunity to see some of the skills that they actually have undertaken. Certainly Board members would be invited to that but by the same token, if you

want to stop by and see what is going in either of the schools, you are more than welcome to do that.

Mr. Benaquista stated I thought before the end of the year, his kids are going to come to a Board meeting. Mr. Harrell stated in addition to that, it is already established the real thing. We are having the parental debate for them to come and see it around the end of May after the holiday and then we are doing the final debate at Stockton University. We are getting the clearances right now to make sure that pictures can be taken and our students can actually be found and once we get all those clearances in, Stockton University is going to film it and make it a part of the creative curriculum for their teacher program at the University which I think is super cool.

Here is our end goal and if you look at this graph it gives you all the information – students who scored in their first writing rubric and their writing assignments – ones, twos, threes, fours and fives. One being the lowest, five being the highest – our end goal is to have 100% of our students to be using Google Docs for every single thing that we do in Academy and that is to give Mrs. Paul a boost because she is a new colleague. In addition to that, we want 80% of our students to be writing in the four and five range on that rubric. If we get 80% of pilot group of 100 kids being able to put that together from January until May, when this ends, I already have a difficult time hearing excuses that our kids can't learn in this District, that would give me more evidence as to why our kids can very much learn if you put the appropriate things in order and drive it and push it really hard.

This has been a great deal of work and I don't know if Mr. Tatum told you, but when we were in the planning stages of this, he sent me back to the drawing table like three times – go back and redo it and I got an attitude at one point because he kept sending me back but I guess he wanted to cross all "t's" and dot all "i's" so this way when it was rolled out, it was rolled out with data points that we did not have before, when I had this conversation with Dr. Francis years ago, and to ensure that the parents and the students would have a program that they could embrace and he could possibly take into the next school year and I am excited to say that it is going pretty smoothly thus far. Our doors are open at any time at both Kawameeh and Burnet and I would really like you to see it because there are two high school students that were dispatched to Kawameeh and two dispatched to Burnet and we can sit back and they do the program and they love it.

Mr. Tatum stated the new budget that we talked about. There is a surprise in that budget. In the budget it does account for the continuation of this program for September and we also put together \$100,000 to get the Saturday Academy back up and running for September. Those are two programs that we are going to put in place for next year. What I'm thinking is that maybe there can be some crossover of the middle school program to demonstrate to the elementary students on a Saturday. So that might be something that we can talk about moving forward.

Mr. McDowell stated I got some emails from Jeff and Guy on some other things but we will hold those off and hopefully some of those questions were answered tonight. Mr. Arminio stated I sent something to you too. Mr. McDowell stated yes you did. Hopefully between now

and the next few weeks we will be able to answer those questions and some of them were very good observations that we need to address at some point before the school year is over.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mrs. Williams stated I went to the basketball game and Union won and one of the parents asked where I was going and I told her I was going to a Board meeting and she said to me what are you guys doing about that parking lot. Mr. McDowell stated that is one of the items Mr. Monge brought up. Mr. Loessel stated we are looking to get that ground down and repaved but at this point we can't do anything about it. We keep filling it with tar and we filled it in three times already. Mr. Monge stated that was on the list. Mr. McDowell stated yes, you gave me a pretty extensive list. We would be here until midnight.

Mr. Nufrio stated just as a follow-up to Mr. Harrell and Mr. Tatum, is there any way we can look into the expansion of the programs with the possibility of adding the summer as well? In order to attract and entice more students, we might be able to look in the possibility of using that program to offset attendance problems with some of the children who may have exceeded the number or they are approaching that number. You go on a Saturday and you spend 3-4 hours and that would probably give you more than really what you are prepared to handle right now, which means it would have to expand all together.

Mr. Tatum stated I'm glad you brought that up. He did something at Burnet – tell them what you did on Saturday mornings. He did something similar to that already.

Mr. Harrell stated we took Saturday detention and we tweaked it and we made it Saturday remediation. Results are everything to me and I am a results driven type of person. Me being the teacher that I am, to sit any place for two hours and do nothing is a waste of my time and a waste of the students' time. You are already there on Saturday so why don't we come up with a new monic device, go to a computer lab, discuss strategies based on a template as to why you are there and what better choices you can make to not really be there again. That is pretty much what we do every single Saturday. It is better than just sitting there for two hours. We are looking to expand that even more but we have to weigh out all the parameters because that is basically teaching at that time. We have to weigh out the parameters of Union based things, time with kids and that program in general. We already have the skeleton there it is just a matter of expanding it accordingly.

Mr. Benaquista stated the high school is addressing the attendance needs right now using the blended apex learning. Some other attendance issues, they are trying to increase that graduation rate.

Mr. McDowell stated when you have the opportunity you might as well use it. Mr. Harrell stated absolutely.

Mrs. Minneci asked do you see the numbers go down for the Saturday detention? Mr. Harrell stated there are certain kids in that building you will constantly see them on Saturday but those are usually the kids that are having problems during the academic day anyway. So if that kid comes there every Saturday as far as I'm concerned and he/she is doing something

constructive as it relates to their education, I don't care if I see them 50 times. Mrs. Minneci stated I agree with that but sometimes they want to be there. Mr. Harrell stated we have been able to cancel Saturday's – just in general, the appeal as to how we deal with discipline in the building in general, that forces our numbers down but kids really don't want to wake up on a Saturday morning and have to talk and write a narrative. They don't want to do that. It does discourage them a little bit.

Mr. Tatum stated I know that Burnet's numbers have dropped, the high school suspensions have dropped tremendously over the last year. We have some data on that and I just got it yesterday and it really is a testament on what is going on in those schools. Those are good things. Mrs. Minneci asked to you have in-school suspension as well? Mr. Tatum stated yes we have that as well. Mrs. Minneci stated they like to stay home but they don't want to sit in school all day. Mr. Tatum stated we can work on how we can expand that to the middle school.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Zuena, seconded by Mr. Nufrio, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

AYES:

Mr. Arminio, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Monge, Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Zuena, Mr. McDowell

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

Respectfully submitted,

GREGORY E. BRENNAN
BOARD SECRETARY