

# CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Closter, New Jersey*

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

*Tenakill Middle School*

*April 4, 2023 - 7:30 PM*

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The Board meeting was called to order by Ms. Finkelstein at 7:31 PM

The following Board members were present:

Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Li, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Wagner, Ms. Yeoh,  
Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein

The following Board members were absent:

None

Also present:

Mr. McHale and Mr. Villanueva

## NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT - Read by the President:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Secretary to the Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting by having the date, time, and place thereof, posted at each school building within the district, district website, the Board of Education office, the Office of the Borough Clerk, and transmitted to *The Record* and *Northern Valley Suburbanite* newspapers.

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

*Mr. Vincent McHale, Superintendent of Schools shared with the Board and the community his report:*

- *Our Kindergarten registration for the 2023-2024 school year is underway. All information is on our district website, [www.ClosterSchools.org](http://www.ClosterSchools.org). The link is on the main page – it is the first banner on the right hand side, entitled, Kindergarten Registration 2023-2024. If you have questions about Kindergarten registration, please call Ms. Cheryl Boehm at Hillside School. If you know of any families with students who will be registering for Kindergarten, please encourage them to register soon!*
- *Save the date for the Closter PTO Annual Dinner Dance, Aloha on the Hudson, to be held on Friday, May 19, 2023, from 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. at Pier 701 in Piermont, NY. The PTO seeks*

sponsors and donations of goods, coupons, and services to include in the raffle and silent auction. Please reach out to [cloptodinnerdance@gmail.com](mailto:cloptodinnerdance@gmail.com) for more information. Thanks to Jackie Morgan and Jill Herling, 2023 Dinner Dance Co-Chairs for leading the planning of this event, which is the PTO's largest fundraiser.

- Our proposed budget for the 2023-2024 school year has been approved by the New Jersey Department of Education Bergen County Office. The public hearing on the budget will be at our next Board of Education meeting on Wednesday, April 26, 2023. Thank you to our Business Administrator, Floro Villanueva, his staff, and the Board of Education Finance and Physical Plant Committee for their continued work on preparing a fiscally responsible budget that ensures we maintain the excellence of the Closter Public Schools.
- This month our schools are observing Arab American Heritage Month. Students will be learning about contributions by Arab Americans, reading books with Arab and Arab American protagonists, and creating artwork and music from Arab cultures. The principals will report all the observance activities from both schools at the next Board meeting. He was pleased to attend Closter's Ramadan Lighting Ceremony on Monday, April 3, 2023. It was a beautiful event attended by many community members to celebrate and learn about Ramadan. Several of our students were guest speakers, and all children attending assisted Mayor Glidden in counting down to the lighting of the crescent moon stand.
- District Goals Update
  - Goal #1: Both schools have identified programs they are using to develop students in relevant life skills, being good citizens, promoting anti-bullying skills, supporting mental health, and developing social-emotional wellness. The programs focus on supporting and developing the whole child.
  - Goal #2: Mr. Tantum and the TMS faculty continue implementing the High School Preparedness Plan for the 2022-2023 school year. As reported in February 2023, grade-level teams identified study skills strategies to teach students, gathered resources to teach the skills explicitly, and identified and shared best practices for teaching study skills. The teachers will be engaging in vertical articulation meetings beginning the week of May 30, 2023, and ending the week of June 13, 2023. Mr. Tantum will provide a year-end summary of the implementation of the High School Preparedness Plan.
  - Goal #3: The faculty and staff have created a "culture of consistency" document for each school to identify a return to the practices that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic and new practices to enhance academics through enrichment activities. He has shared the documents with the Board of Education trustees.
  - Goal #4: In February 2023, we surveyed teachers and certificated staff to determine their thoughts on professional development, participation on district committees, level of engagement, and morale. The survey data was shared with the personnel committee. The next step will be to partner with teachers and certificated staff to design solutions for challenges identified through the survey. This work will continue in the 2023-2024 school year.
- Ramadan Mubarak to all of the families observing Ramadan this month. Chag Pesach Sameach to families observing Passover, beginning tomorrow, April 5, 2023. Happy Easter to families celebrating on April 9, 2023. Wishing everyone all the best during this holy season for so many!

- Schools will be closed for spring recess from Friday, April 7, 2023, through Sunday, April 16, 2023. Have a wonderful vacation! Schools will reopen on Monday, April 17, 2023.

Ms. Finkelstein thanked Mr. McHale for providing an update on the goals, and also appreciated the format of the culture of consistency document that was shared.

### BOARD COMMITTEES

Dr. Puttannah reported that the Curriculum Committee met on April 4th and discussed the following items:

- Reviewed the update to the ESL report card for Hillside Elementary School. The report card is aligned to WIDA standards.
- The district will undergo a full QSAC for the 2023-2023 school year, and the committee reviewed the indicators for instruction and program - focusing on student achievement scores, and alignment of curriculum documents with the NJSLS.
- Transition to High School as part of the district goal, specifically how we support students with IEPs and 504. The committee also discussed how the district is working on improving students' writing skills and expectations of homework.
- Chat GPT and other Artificial Intelligence (AI) as effective tools for learning.

The Finance Committee will meet on April 19th, and the Personnel Committee met last meeting.

### PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross ▾ to open the meeting to the public.

Statements made by individual participants are limited to a duration of three (3) minutes unless otherwise announced at the beginning of the discussion. A maximum of 15 minutes for public input is scheduled as per bylaw 0167. The Board urges large groups to select one person to represent them. The Board reminds those individuals who take the opportunity to speak to please step up, identify themselves by name and address, and to limit their comments to items listed on the agenda.

### **No Public Comments**

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross ▾ to resume the regular order of business.

### BOARD OPERATIONS

Moved by Ms. Li ▾ , seconded by Ms. Micera ▾ to approve Motions A - C.

Motions were approved ▾ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Li, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Wagner, Ms. Yeoh,  
Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Minutes**

Motion to approve the March 22, 2023, meeting minutes.

B. **APPROVAL - Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB)**

Motion to affirm the decision of the Superintendent of Schools regarding Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB) incident(s) #TMS-2223-14 reported to the Board in Executive Session at the March 22, 2023, meeting.

C. **APPROVAL - Use of Facilities for Closter Recreation**

Motion to approve Closter Recreation Department to use Tenakill Middle School gymnasium beginning April 2023 - June 2023 for a volleyball camp.

**CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Dr. Puttannah; Members: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Wagner, Ms. Yeoh*

Moved by Dr. Puttannah , seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A - C.

*Dr. Puttannah has a comment about item B. She's grateful for the 5th grade team for organizing the trip going to the Liberty Science Center.*

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Li, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Wagner, Ms. Yeoh,  
Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Staff Conferences**

Motion to approve the following staff conferences:

Staff Member(s): Kathy Hedenberg, Gila Rachlin & Leanne Schettino  
Conference: Speech Therapy (SpeechTherapyPD.com)  
Location: Virtual  
Date: Open until 6/30/23  
Cost to Board: \$354.00 total

Staff Member(s): Kate Weisenseel  
Conference: Northern Valley Counselors Meeting  
Location: HES  
Date: 4/27/23  
Cost to Board: \$0

B. **APPROVAL - Field Trips**

Motion to approve the following field trips:

School: Tenakill Middle School  
Group: Grade 5  
Month: May 2023  
Destination: Liberty Science Center  
Location: Jersey City, NJ

C. **APPROVAL - Staff Coursework**

Motion to approve the following courses for 2022-2023 as recommended to the Superintendent by the Principals:

Staff Member: Min Jeong Kim  
Course No./Title: 1) MA 934 Culturally Responsive Mathematics Teaching  
2) EDU 921 Writing in the Mathematics Classroom  
Institution: Fresno Pacific University  
Credits: 6 total (3 credits each)

Staff Member: Leigh Bomzer  
Course No./Title: 1) MA 934 Culturally Responsive Mathematics Teaching  
2) EDU 921 Writing in the Mathematics Classroom  
Institution: Fresno Pacific University  
Credits: 6 total (3 credits each)

**FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Ms. Kwon; Members: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Yeoh*

Moved by Ms. Kwon , seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A - G.

*Ms. Kwon had a question about the location of the Park Academy. Mr. McHale responded that he's not sure what town it is in, Mr. Villanueva added it's part of the Pascack Valley Regional School District. Ms. Finkelstein then asked if it was private. Mr McHale answered no, and further explained how it is operated by a different school district similar to the Valley Program.*

*Ms. Fanelli had a question about the chromebooks and asked if all the chromebook cases were for the new students or the current ones as well. Mr. McHale responded by saying that it is going to be determined on the costs. He acknowledged that the kids are not using the cases as much because they are bulky. Mr. McHale shared that there are at least ten broken laptops per week. The laptops get fixed for 3-5 weeks and they need loaner devices for the time being.*

Ms. Kwon asked if the laptop is broken then does the student have to cover the full cost of the laptop. Mr. McHale responded that so far all the repairs are covered under insurance. Mr. Villanueva added that if the student doesn't need to use the insurance then we don't charge them as it is a yearly cost.

Ms. Finkelstein then asked if we are still funding the insurance. Mr. Villanueva responded that it is part of the initial cost when the chromebooks were purchased.

Ms. Salamea-Cross then asked if the students get the same chromebook for the four years. Mr. McHale responded yes and they are even allowed to bring it home during the summer.

Ms. Kwon asked about the life-span of these laptops. Mr. McHale responded that it is only four years and added that we sell the chromebooks to a company for a very minimal amount.

Ms. Li asked if there is any penalty for repeat offenders who keep breaking their laptops. Mr. Villanueva responded by saying they are going to have to pay the yearly fee rather than just paying once.

Dr. Puttannah requested clarification on item G, as far as the type of educational services Learn Well provides. Mr. McHale responded by saying that it involves a special needs student who is placed out of district because of a complicated situation. He also added that the student is hospitalized and needs bed-side home instruction. Ms. Li had a follow-up question on item G, and asked if we paid for the recent contract as it also says 2022 school year. Mr. McHale responded that it's just starting now and the student will receive these services from this point on to June.

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Li, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Wagner, Ms. Yeoh,  
Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Monthly Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from March 24, 2023 to March 31, 2023, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$680,270.50
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 7,280.19
Total	\$687,550.69

B. **APPROVAL - Monthly Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from April 1, 2023 to April 3, 2023, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$345,374.32
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 6,386.52
Enterprise (Milk – Fund 60)	\$ 1,077.48
Total	\$352,838.32

C. **APPROVAL – Special Education Placements**

Motion to approve the following 2022-2023 Special Education placements for Closter Students:

<b><u>NJSMART#</u></b>	<b><u>Tuition</u></b>	<b><u>Grade</u></b>	<b><u>Placement</u></b>
4653986607	\$24,343.88	6	Park Academy

D. **APPROVAL – Acceptance of School Climate Change Pilot Grant**

Motion to accept the School Climate Change Pilot Grant in the amount of \$6,660 as approved by the NJ Department of Education on March 24, 2023. The grant is to support the school district's implementation of the NJ Student Learning Standards for Climate Change Education. Closter Public Schools also certifies that:

- The above referenced grant shall be implemented in accordance with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. Notification of Grant Award and the approved FY 2023 School Climate Change Pilot application, including assurances, filed with the NJDOE which was used as the basis of awarding the grant.
- The grant shall be administered and monitored in accordance with the appropriate state and federal regulations.
- Wherever the program supported with these funds involves the procurement of goods or services from vendors or consultants, written contracts between LEA and such vendors or consultants, and the award for such contracts, shall be in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A-1, et-seq.

E. **APPROVAL – Purchase of 180 Chromebooks**

Motion to approve the purchase of 180 chromebooks for Tenakill Middle School from CDW-G in the amount of \$97,050.60 through the Educational Services Commission of NJ contract - CBK ESCNJ/AEPA-22G.

F. **APPROVAL - Settlement Agreement**

BE IT RESOLVED by the Closter Board of Education (hereinafter referred to as the "Board") that the terms, stipulations and conditions as established in the Settlement Agreement and Release (hereinafter referred to as "Agreement") between the Board and the Parents of a student whose name is on file in the Superintendent's office, and which Agreement is located in the student's

file, are hereby adopted and approved by the Board. The Board President and Business Administrator/Board Secretary are hereby authorized and directed to execute the Settlement Agreement and Release, and any other documents necessary to effectuate the settlement.

G. **APPROVAL – Educational Services Contract with Learn Well**

Motion to approve the educational services contract with Learn Well for student #6176799742 at an estimated cost of \$9,675.25 for the remainder of SY 2022-2023.

**PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Ms. Salamea-Cross; Members: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera*

Moved by Ms. Salamea-Cross , seconded by Ms. Micera to approve Motions A - G.

*Mr. McHale started by saying thank you to the parents for volunteering to go on the trip. He shared that under item D, the approval of the resignation of Kayce Perkins who is the school psychologist was a difficult circumstance for Ms. Perkins and wished her all the best. Mr. McHale then thanked Dr. Joan Romo. He's very grateful that she's going to be here for the rest of the year, pending clearance from NJ Division of Pension and Benefits.*

*Ms. Kwon asked what the double asterisks in item A meant. Mr. McHale responded that the asterisks means that the chaperones are not cleared to go on the trip yet due to their fingerprints and background checks not being submitted or cleared.*

*Ms. Kwon asked another question, this time about the mandarin teacher. Mr. McHale responded by saying that the district has advertised the opening, and we have some leads for substitute mandarin teachers for those two months. If we could not find a leave replacement teacher, students would then do an online mandarin class, supervised by a substitute teacher.*

*Ms. Fanelli had a question about item F and asked if Ms. Durocher holds a position in any of the schools. Mr. McHale responded that Ms. Durocher is a teacher at Tenakill and has stepped up to go on the trip.*

*Dr. Puttannah asked if there would be more chaperones if not all of them get their fingerprints in or if there is a backup plan for this. Mr. McHale responded by saying there is an extra chaperone for each grade in case of illness or if the fingerprints don't come back in time.*

*Ms. Salamea-Cross asked if the chaperones will get some sort of training to be able to deal with the children on the trip. Mr. McHale responded that he doesn't know exactly what is going to be shared with the chaperones, but there is going to be a meeting where they will learn what to expect on the trip.*

Motions were approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Li, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Wagner, Ms. Yeoh,  
Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein



NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Volunteers for Tenakill Middle School Trips**

Motion to approve the following volunteers for the spring overnight field trips for grades 6, 7 and 8 (names with asterisk do not yet have fingerprint approval returned):

- Alvarado, Ana\*\* (8)
- Cho, Christopher (8)
- Choi, Youngjun (7)
- Coetzer, Claudia (8)
- Dhan, Felice Lynn\*\* (6)
- Estrems, Marilyn\*\* (8)
- Hughes, Jodi (6)
- Keren, Yamit Jamie\*\* (6)
- Li, Jia Dee (6)
- Mizrakhi, Stella (7)
- Premani, Farheen (8)
- Reines, Sindy\*\* (6)
- Sabnani, (Anil) Atemjeet (8)
- Shemesh, Aviad\*\* (6)
- Torgovicky, Rafael (6)
- Tripodi, Lisa (7)
- Umit-Diskaya, Betul (6)
- Yacouel, David (6)
- Yodfat, Inbar (7)
- Zeweldie, Meaza H.\*\* (6)

B. **APPROVAL - Leave of Absence for Difei Shi for the 2023-2024 School Year**

Motion to approve an unpaid leave of absence for Difei Shi, TMS Mandarin Teacher, from September 1, 2023, through October 30, 2023, with an anticipated return date of October 31, 2023, using 8 out of her 12 weeks of FMLA.

C. **APPROVAL - Leave of Absence for Gila Rachlin**

Motion to approve the leave of absence for Gila Rachlin, Speech Therapist, from April 17, 2023, to May 5, 2023, using 15 sick days with an anticipated return date of May 8, 2023.

D. **APPROVAL - Resignation of Kayce Perkins, School Psychologist**

Motion to approve, with regrets, the resignation of Kayce Perkins, School Psychologist, as of April 21, 2023.

E. **APPROVAL - Substitute Teachers**

Motion to approve the following substitute teachers for the 2022-2023 School Year:

**Name**

Nahuel Quiroga  
Lena Kim

**Certification**

Pending NJ Substitute Certification & criminal history verification  
NJ Substitute Certification (as needed)

F. **APPROVAL - Michelle Durocher as Chaperone for the 8th Grade Washington D.C. Trip - May 2023**

Motion to approve Michelle Durocher as a chaperone on the 8th grade trip to Washington D.C. in May 2023 at a stipend of \$150 per night.

G. **APPROVAL - Joan Romo, School Psychologist**

Motion to approve Joan Romo as part-time School Psychologist, for the remainder of the 2022-2023 school year at the hourly rate of MA60 Step 17, or \$76.61, equivalent to a salary of \$111,084, pending clearance from the NJ Division of Pension and Benefits.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Villanueva shared the following information:

- *Reminder to the trustees to please make sure that you complete the Chief School Administrator self-paced training. He asked the trustees to let him know via email if they successfully completed the training.*
- *The 2023 NJ School Boards Conference is from October 23 to October 26 and registration is now open. If we have more than five people attending, it is worth paying for the group registration rather than the individual registration. Please email Mr. Villanueva by May 1st if trustees are planning on attending.*
- *The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), in conjunction with New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and New Jersey Schools Development Authority (NJSDA) introduced the School HEPA Distribution Program. The goal of the program is to provide layered protection from respiratory illnesses and address other airborne irritants such as dust, mold, pollen, etc. All New Jersey schools are eligible to receive portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration purifiers and up to three corresponding replacement HEPA filters per unit at no-cost to schools from a state-sponsored vendor. Each purifier/three filter set is designed to last for two full school years. NJDOH will review all requests for HEPA purifiers, therefore receiving the requested number of HEPA purifiers is not guaranteed. Mr. Villanueva responded to the application and hoped to receive some free purifiers. We have units in some classrooms and offices, and each unit costs about \$800, so it would be great to receive them for free.*
- *Next meeting is the public hearing of the district budget. Mr. Villanueva is inviting the trustees and the community to be present for the meeting.*

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

Moved by Ms. Micera , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross to open the meeting to public discussion.

**No Public Comments**

Moved by Ms. Micera , seconded by Ms. Salamea-Cross to close the meeting to public discussion.

**CLOSED SESSION MOTION (If required)**

Moved by Ms. Fanelli , seconded by Ms. Micera to approve the following Closed Session Motion.

Motion was approved by a voice vote of the Board:

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Li, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Micera, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Wagner, Ms. Yeoh,  
Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein

NAYS: None

BE IT RESOLVED that the Closter Board of Education will adjourn to a Closed Session to discuss the following:

**Personnel Matters  
Negotiations Update  
Legal Matters**

The matters so discussed will be disclosed to the public as soon as and to the extent that such disclosure can be made without adversely affecting the public.

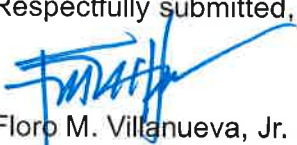
The Board went into Closed Session at 8:11 PM.

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 8:52 PM.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Ms. Wagner , seconded by Ms. Yeoh to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Floro M. Villanueva, Jr.  
Business Administrator/Board Secretary