

# CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Closter, New Jersey*

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

*Tenakill Middle School*

*August 9, 2023 - 7:30 PM*

The Board meeting was called to order by Ms. Finkelstein at 7:34 PM.

The following Board members were present:

Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Finkelstein

The following Board members were absent:

Ms. Kwon, Ms. Wagner, Ms. Salamea-Cross

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 his report to the trustees and the community:*

*It's August! While the summer is still in full swing, we are busy preparing for school opening in twenty-eight days. We will welcome students back on Wednesday, September 6, 2023!*

*This school year, we will warmly greet eleven new staff members, seven long-term leave replacement teachers, and five new paraprofessionals. The new hires will attend a district orientation on Monday,*

August 21, 2023, to learn about our instructional expectations, the evaluation process, business office procedures, and daily procedures. Our new teachers will then attend a three-day instructional orientation delivered by the Northern Valley Curriculum Center beginning on Tuesday, August 22, 2023. During that orientation, they will learn how to support students as they grow academically, socially, and emotionally. He trusts that the experience and skills of our newly hired staff will enrich our wonderful school district.

Our full staff will return on Friday, September 1, 2023, and Tuesday, September 5, 2023, for staff orientation and professional development.

As previously discussed, the proposed Board of Education bond referendum vote will be held on Tuesday, September 26, 2023, from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at regular voting locations. The Board of Education will present an information session for senior citizens at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, August 16, 2023, at the Closter Senior Center. A referendum information session for all citizens will be held on Thursday, September 7, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the Tenakill Middle School Auditorium. We have mailed all residents a referendum information card, which should arrive this week. If approved by the Closter voters, this bond referendum will allow us to replace boilers and replace roofs at both schools, replace windows at TMS, and add HVAC in the TMS gymnasium. The projects are eligible for debt service aid from the state of New Jersey, thereby reducing the cost to taxpayers. He encourages everyone to visit [our district webpage](#) to learn more about the September 26<sup>th</sup> referendum vote.

This week he has received some communication from parents and community members concerned about ratings on GreatSchools.org. A not-for-profit organization maintains this website, and its ratings are unofficial. The ratings are based on New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) data from 2021-2022. Our testing data shows that students are achieving far above the state average, and most are at or above grade level (in language arts and mathematics, the tested subjects). The GreatSchools.org rating of student progress is most likely based on the New Jersey student growth percentile that measures student growth compared to other students in the state who have scored similarly. Admittedly, some of our students grew less significantly after the pandemic while remaining above grade level. The student growth percentile measures the relative change in a student's performance compared to all students in the state who took the same two tests year-over-year. So for Hillside School, only fourth-grade students receive a student growth percentile rating because two years of state testing scores are necessary to calculate growth. It is designed to measure student growth in the aggregate. Still, it is not designed to estimate the effect of the school on that growth or to measure the quality of a school. When he presented the [state assessment data report for 2021-2022](#), he shared interventions we put in place to help students meet and exceed state standards and to help students to make significant growth. We will measure the success of those interventions when we receive finalized results from the 2022-2023 state assessments in September. After receiving that information, he will present the data report to the Board and community. Closter Public Schools has dedicated administrators, excellent teachers, supportive parents, and intelligent students. We will continue supporting all learners and providing quality instruction every day. He is hopeful that we will see improvement in our student growth outcomes.

Enjoy the last weeks of summer!

## BOARD COMMITTEES

*Dr. Puttannah reported that the Curriculum Committee met before tonight's meeting.*

- *The committee had received access to the curriculum documents that must be approved for the 2023-2024 school year. At the next meeting, all trustees will have the opportunity to review those documents. There were no changes to the curriculum documents from last year as the Department of Education made no changes. The committee recommends continuing the use of these documents and the curriculum. Parents will continue to have an option to opt out of a portion or some lessons under the health curriculum if they would like to.*
- *The committee also reviewed the state assessment for English Language Learners where last year, 126 students in ESL were tested from K-8. These results will be presented at the next Board of Education meeting. Majority of students are in the developing and expanding category.*
- *There will be QSAC training on August 30th at Bergen Community College to be attended by Mr. McHale, Mr. Villanueva and Mr. McElroy.*
- *The committee discussed a proposed amendment of the American Rescue Plan grant to provide elementary school teachers with professional development.*
- *Orientation sessions are on August 21st for the new hires.*

*The rest of the board committees have scheduled meetings in the upcoming weeks.*

## PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Ms. Yeoh ▾ 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 Dr. Puttannah ▾ to resume the regular order of business.

## BOARD OPERATIONS

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

*Ms. Fanelli asked a question about item D. She asked if the PTO use of facilities means if they would still have to fill out a form if they want to use our facilities or is it approving everything for the full year. Mr. Villanueva responded saying that the PTO provided their activities and therefore received a blanket approval on all planned events and this is mostly for insurance purposes.*

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

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Li, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Yeoh

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Minutes**

Motion to approve the July 12, 2023, minutes.

B. **APPROVAL - Independent Educational Evaluations Maximum Costs**

WHEREAS, on May 27, 2021, the Board adopted Policy 2468 governing Independent Educational Evaluations; and

WHEREAS, Policy 2468 requires the Board to annually determine and approve the maximum costs it will pay for such evaluations, with anything above those maximum costs deemed unreasonably excessive;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board hereby adopts the following maximum costs for the assessments listed below when they are conducted as part of an independent educational evaluation, consistent with Policy No. 2468, effective immediately and through June 30, 2024:

- Assistive Technology: \$1,250
- Auditory Processing/Hearing Acuity: \$1,000
- Early Childhood: \$1,350
- Functional or Adaptive Behavior: \$1,000
- Educational: \$1,000
- Neurological: \$1,500
- Neuropsychological: \$2,000
- Neuropsychiatric: \$1,500
- Occupational Therapy: \$750
- Physical Therapy: \$750
- Psychiatric: \$1,250
- Psychological: \$1,000
- Social History: \$750
- Speech/Language: \$1,000
- Visual Acuity: \$1,500

- C. **APPROVAL - Before and After School Enrichment Programs Contract**  
 Motion to approve the contract between the Closter Board of Education and KCE Champions LLC to provide Before and After School Enrichment Programs. The agreement includes a facility rental fee of \$1,000 per month.
- D. **APPROVAL - Closter PTO Use of Facilities**  
 Motion to approve the Closter PTO to host events at Hillside Elementary School and Tenakill Middle School during the 2023-2024 school year.
- E. **APPROVAL - Use of Facilities for PTO's Annual Hillside Kinder Camp, Summer 2023**  
 Motion to approve the Closter PTO to use Hillside Elementary School outdoor grounds to host the Annual Hillside Kinder Camp, Summer 2023 on Monday, August 14, at 4 p.m. - 8 p.m. with a rain date of Thursday, August 17, at 4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- F. **APPROVAL - Closter Junior Girl Scout Troop 97788**  
 Motion to approve the Closter Junior Girl Scout Troop 97788 the use of a classroom at Tenakill Middle School for meetings during the 2023-2024 school year.

**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.

*Ms. Fanelli asked in item C if the mentoring plan is something new or something we have always done. Mr. McHale responded that the mentoring plan is an annual requirement from the Department of Education and this is to support new teachers for their certification program. Dr. Puttannah asked if there was any other description to give as far as the NGSS conference in item A. Mr. McHale responded that NGSS stands for next generation science standards and they are already in use in the State of New Jersey. It is a shift in thinking on how students think about science and Ms. Moidu and Ms. McSweeney attended prior training sessions before and thinks it's great training. This year, they will be attending multiple days of training with other TMS teachers and Mr. Tantum and it will be valuable to students and the implementation of science standards.*

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

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Li, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Yeoh

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Staff Conferences**

Motion to approve the following staff conferences:

Staff Member(s): Keith McElroy, Vincent McHale & Kristen Zanin

Conference: Bergen County Curriculum Consortium  
Location: TBA  
Date: Dates TBA - 3 Meetings Per Year  
Cost to Board: \$450.00 (Total Dues for 3 People for 2023-2024)

Staff Member(s): Kathy Lee, Cassandra San-Emeterio, Margaret Tahtabrounian  
Conference: WIDA Annual Conference  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 10/18/23  
Cost to Board: \$585.00 total (\$195 per person) from TITLE IV funds

Staff Member(s): Vincent McHale, Floro Villanueva Jr., Keith McElroy  
Conference: QSAC Training  
Location: Bergen Community College - Lyndhurst  
Date: 8/30/23  
Cost to Board: \$19.74 (mileage)

Staff Member(s): Brianna McSweeney, Shireen Moidu, Brianna Kehoe,  
Shannon SanGeorge and William Tantum  
Conference: NGSS District Partnership Program  
Location: Raritan Valley Community College  
Date: 11/1/23, 11/29/23, 1/24/24  
Cost to Board: \$7,637.60 total

**B. APPROVAL - Field Trips**

Motion to approve the following field trips:

School: Tenakill Middle School  
Group: Grade 8  
Month: October 2023  
Destination: NVRHS-D  
Location: Demarest, NJ

**C. APPROVAL - Mentoring Plan for the 2023-2024 School Year**

Motion to approve the Mentoring Plan for the 2023-2024 school year.

**FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE**

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

Moved by Ms. Yeoh ▾ , seconded by Ms. Micera ▾ to approve Motions A - J.

Mr. McHale shared that item J is to appoint a new Treasurer of School Monies. It is a position that all school districts are required to have and is similar to an accounting position. Norma Ketter who was the past Treasurer of School Monies passed away over the weekend. Mr. McHale and the Board of Education extend our sympathy to her family and are saddened by her passing. Mr. McHale shared that we have appointed Matthew Lynaugh as the Interim Treasurer of School Monies and he is the Business Administrator in another district and has agreed to help us.

Ms. Li asked how many years Ms. Ketter served our district. Mr. Villanueva responded that Ms. Ketter has served for more than a decade. Ms. Li asked about the interview process. Mr. McHale responded that the job will be posted and someone qualified will be accepted into the position. Ms. Li then asked if Mr. Lynaugh had reconciled items A and B on the agenda. Mr. McHale responded no, and Ms. Li asked if Mr. Villanueva did. Mr. Villanueva explained that every month, there is the treasurer report being approved by the board - which is totally independent of his report as a measure of checks and balances. Even though he cannot officially certify, he knows that in June and July, all accounts are balanced.

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

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Li, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Yeoh

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Monthly Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from July 12, 2023, to July 31, 2023, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$801,668.50
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 89,620.10
Total	\$891,288.60

B. **APPROVAL - Monthly Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from August 1, 2023, to August 7, 2023, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$275,078.71
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 2,803.00
Total	\$277,881.71

C. **APPROVAL - District Share of Region III Consortium**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Closter Board of Education hereby approves the SY 2023-2024 portion of the Consortium with Northern Valley Regional High School acting as the LEA (Local Education Agency) for Region III as follows:

<u>Program/Service</u>	<u>23-24 Contribution</u>
Special Education	\$119,942.00
Physical Therapy	\$ 44,000.00 (estimate)
Occupational Therapy	\$ 60,000.00 (estimate)

D. **APPROVAL - Participation in Region III Transportation Consortium**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Closter Board of Education hereby approves participation in the 2023-2024 Region III - Special Education Transportation Consortium with Northern Valley Regional High School acting as the LEA (Local Education Agency) for the District's special education transportation.

E. **APPROVAL - Instructional Resources**

Motion to approve the purchase of the following proprietary instructional programs and web-based services:

- Powerschool (Schoology) - \$7,979.70
- Learning A-Z Raz Kids - \$7,920.00
- IXL - \$19,800.00
- Achieve 3000 - \$12,795.00
- Nearpod Inc - \$6,751.65

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 - Nursing Services Contract**

Motion to approve the 1:1 nursing service contracts for student 9597653741 and/or 1595602128 from July 1, 2023, until the end of the school year at an estimated cost of \$170,000.00.

- Norton Education Group at a rate of \$75.00 per hour
- Bayada Nursing at a rate of \$75.00 per hour
- Starlight Nursing Agency at a rate of \$75.00 per hour
- Loving Care Agency dba Aveanna Nursing at a rate of \$75.00 per hour

H. **APPROVAL - Learners Compass Therapist for Student ID #8096612745**

Motion to approve **Dina Marinaccio/Maria Rojas** from parent-paid Learners Compass Therapist for Student ID #8096612745 for the 2023-2024 school year. Fingerprints are already on file in the Superintendent's Office.

I. **APPROVAL - Purchase and Price of Milk**

Motion to approve the purchase of milk from Cream-O-Land Dairy with headquarters in Florence, NJ and that the price of milk shall be \$0.35/half-pint for the 2023-2024 school year.



J. **APPROVAL – Appointment of Interim Treasurer of School Monies**

Motion to approve the appointment of Matthew Lynaugh as Interim Treasurer of School Monies on a month to month, and as needed basis effective immediately, at a rate of \$500 per month.

**PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

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

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

*Mr. McHale commented that in item E, clinical interns is the new word for student teachers and we have agreed to partner with Ramapo College. Those two clinical interns are our first two clinical interns that would be working with us for the entire year. He is also grateful to Ms. Cummings and Ms. Carpenter for taking on the clinical interns and helping them through their educational journey. Ms. Yeoh asked if they will be adding more clinical interns during the school year. Mr. McHale responded that Mr. McElroy has attended a virtual meeting with Ramapo College and they were saying that they have a couple of students who have not been placed and it is possible for a district to get another intern before the start of the year. Ms. Yeoh then asked if that happens if we have any other teachers who are willing to work with the clinical interns. Mr. McHale responded that Ramapo lets us know if the interns have qualifications and certifications and then we would reach out to teachers with that same certification to see if they are willing to do it.*

*Ms. Li asked in item D what a plus program teacher was and who the replacement is. Mr. McHale responded that a plus program teacher is extra support for students through instruction. The plus program is usually for language arts and mathematics. We will be looking for a replacement plus teacher once it gets approved tonight because we can't post jobs unless the board has approved it. Mr. McHale followed up by saying that in item G it is a more critical situation as the leave of absence starts on September 1st and that is why he had to post an anticipated opening.*

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

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Li, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Yeoh

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Cara Kupersmith as Part-Time Speech (.40 FTE) Therapist**

Motion to approve Cara Kupersmith as part-time Speech Therapist, tenure track position, for the 2023-2024 school year at a salary of \$34,478 (.40 FTE, which is 2/3 of the MA Step 10-11 \$86,196), with a start date of September 1, 2023, pending criminal history background check

B. **APPROVAL - Carsten Kramer as Grade 5 Long-Term Leave Replacement**

Motion to approve Carsten Kramer as Long-Term Leave Replacement - Grade 5 Teacher (I.M.), for the 2023-2024 school year. Salary will be \$200 per day on days 1 through 10; the beginning

of day 11, \$54,000, BA Step 0, prorated, with a start date of September 1, 2023, pending a criminal history background check.

C. **APPROVAL - Devin Rallo as Tenakill School Paraprofessional**

Motion to approve Devin Rallo as a TMS paraprofessional for the 2023-2024 school year at a salary of \$20.22 per hour, 5.75 hours per day, pending criminal history background check.

D. **APPROVAL - Leave of Absence for Noelle Carter**

Motion to approve Noelle Carter, Plus Program Teacher, for a leave of absence from November 23, 2023, through February 23, 2024, as follows:

- Paid sick leave (4 sick days) from November 27, 2023, through November 30, 2023
- An FMLA and NJFLA child bonding leave from December 1, 2023, through February 23, 2024
- Anticipated return to work date is February 26, 2024

E. **APPROVAL - Clinical Interns from Ramapo College for the 2023-2024 School Year**

Motion to approve the following clinical interns from Ramapo College for the 2023-2024 school year:

- Kira Podlipski - working with Susan Carpenter in Grade 1 (HES)
- Sheriza Mohamed - working with Amanda Cummings in Grade 5 (TMS)

F. **APPROVAL – Additional Hours for Occupational Therapist for Summer Program**

Motion to retroactively approve Nancy Saccoccio, Occupational Therapist, for ESY OT supervision and services for an additional 11 hours at a rate of \$50.00/hour.

G. **APPROVAL - Unpaid Discretionary Leave of Absence for Jodi Sunshine, Tenakill School Gifted and Talented Teacher**

Motion to approve an unpaid discretionary leave of absence for Jodi Sunshine, G & T Teacher, from September 1, 2023, through November 3, 2023. Anticipated return to work date is November 6, 2023.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

*Mr. Villanueva shared that a new law signed by Governor Murphy on July 20, 2023 sets new schedules for those with November election. One of the notable changes is that the Board of Education must certify the election results within two days after the Board of county canvassers meets to certify the results. It is interesting because that date is going to be November 23, the day before Thanksgiving. Unless there will be updates on legislation, we will need to meet for a Special Meeting on November 24, 2023, Friday just to certify the results. In the past, we were able to certify the results and swear in the new trustees at our Reorganization meeting. Additional information will be forthcoming.*

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Ms. Yeoh ▾ to open the meeting to public discussion.

***No Public Comments***

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Dr. Puttannah ▾ to close the meeting to public discussion.

**CLOSED SESSION MOTION (If required)**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ ▾ , seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ ▾ to approve the following Closed Session Motion. Motion was \_\_\_\_\_ ▾ by a voice vote of the Board:

YEAS: Ms. Fanelli, Ms. Micera, Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Li, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Yeoh

NAYS: None

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

**There was no closed session needed**

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 PM.

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at \_\_\_\_\_PM.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Ms. Yeoh ▾ to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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