

CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Closter, New Jersey

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Tenakill Middle School

December 6, 2023 - 7:30 PM

The Board meeting was called to order by Ms. Salamea-Cross at 7:30 PM.

The following Board members were present:

Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Fanelli, Dr. Puttanniah, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Finkelstein (arrived 8:20), Ms. Micera, Ms. Li (arrived 7:31)

The following Board members were absent:

Ms. Wagner

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

PRESENTATION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 23 (SY 22-23) ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Jeffrey Bliss from Lerch, Vinci and Bliss, LLP presented to the Board and the community the 2022-2023 Audit Report.

- *For the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2023, the District received an unmodified audit opinion, which means the financial statements are presented in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The District also received an unmodified opinion in relation to federal and state grants.*
- *There are no recommendations or violations of internal controls for the fiscal year.*

- *The District added money into various reserves – Capital, Surplus, Maintenance and continued to fund a \$700,000 tax relief for the SY 24-25 budget.*
- *Mr. Bliss also commended the district for responsible fiscal management and the success of the most recent referendum. The reserves significantly helped the district achieve a favorable bond rating.*

Ms. Salamea-Cross was pleased to hear about the excellent audit report.

PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

Ms. Dianne Smith, Principal of Hillside Elementary School, shared her report with the board and the community:

- *Enrollment Update: Current enrollment at Hillside is 625 students.*
- *Staff News: Ms. Zanin has returned to Hillside this week.*
- *PTO Holiday Boutique: The event was successful, and students had a great shopping experience. Appreciation was expressed to the volunteers who made it possible.*
- *Parent/Teacher Conferences: The school hopes parents found the conferences informative and beneficial in understanding their child's experience at Hillside.*
- *Hillside Helpers: Fourth-grade students served as helpers at the Thanksgiving concert and during conferences, welcoming parents and assisting with directions.*
- *Student Council Officers Announcement: The new Student Council officers were introduced, including Stella Hong as Secretary, William Lee as Treasurer, Shirin Masoumi as Vice President, and Anna Yang as President.*
- *Trimester One Conclusion: Trimester one has ended, and report cards will be available on December 11 after school. An email will be sent regarding the portal opening.*
- *CAP Parent Presentation: A Child Assault Prevention (CAP) parent presentation is scheduled for December 11 at 2 pm in the Hillside gymnasium. Students are also scheduled to participate in the program.*
- *Upcoming Assessments: Kindergarten, Grade 2, and Grade 4 assessments are scheduled for January 8-12.*
- *Grade-Level Updates:*
 - *Kindergarten is preparing for a holiday show and tell.*
 - *First-grade students are learning story elements and subtraction strategies.*
 - *Second-grade authors are working on personal narratives.*
 - *Third-grade students are studying the state of New Jersey.*
 - *Fourth-grade students are learning about the branches of government and their roles.*
- *Computer Science Week Activities: Ms. Iyo shared activities for Computer Science Week and coding.*
- *Winter Concert: The fourth-grade chorus and string ensemble will perform on December 14. Dress rehearsal for second and third graders is on December 13.*
- *December Spirit Days: Various themed spirit days are planned for the next week, including wearing holiday socks, lights or sparkly items, and holiday hats or headgear.*
- *After-School Academic Support: The after-school academic support program concludes on December 19 and 21.*

- *Early Dismissal: On December 22, there will be early dismissal.*

Miss Smth wished Hillside families a happy and healthy holiday season.

Mr. William Tantum, Principal of Tenakill Middle School, shared with the Board and the community his report:

- *Enrollment Update: As of December 6, 2023, Tenakill's student enrollment is 572.*
- *Professional Development: NGSS Science Teacher Professional Development continued in the past month.*
- *School Safety and Climate Team: The team has reviewed the process for implementing the state survey and is setting a date for releasing the survey to staff, students, and parents.*
- *Team members met yesterday to review and begin planning how to address District Goal #3. Another meeting is scheduled for January.*
- *Threat Assessment Team: The TMS Threat Assessment Team met today to initiate the eight-step process of setting up the Threat Assessment Program. Another meeting is scheduled for January.*
- *Academics:*
 - *Trimester two began today.*
 - *Report card grades for the first trimester will be released next Monday after school.*
- *Winter Concert: December 12 - Afternoon performance for students. Evening performances for families at 6:30 and 7:15.*
- *Programs:*
 - *NJ CAP (bullying) for grade 6 next week.*
 - *Teen CAP (sexual harassment & assault) for grade 8 the following week.*
- *Trips: Grade 8 - DC trip: 114 students have signed up to attend.*
- *Testing: Renaissance Achievement Test was administered last week.*
- *NAEP names were released yesterday. Parents will be informed once students are grouped.*
- *Sports: Basketball season began yesterday with victories for both boys and girls teams.*
- *PTO: The PTO Holiday Boutique is scheduled for tomorrow and Friday through social studies classes.*
- *Porchlight programs for both Grades 2-5 and 6-8 will begin soon.*

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

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

- *Congratulations to the Board of Education candidates Melody Finkelstein, Chris Kwon, and Edmund Choi, who are the official winners in the November 7th election. Mr. Choi was the successful write-in candidate, announced by the Bergen County Clerk on November 20, 2023. The newly elected Board trustees will be sworn in at the January 3, 2024, reorganization meeting.*
- *He thanked our outgoing Board trustee, Dr. Lukshmi Puttanniah, for her devoted service since 2021. On behalf of the Closter community, He thanked her for her knowledge, skill, and dedication, which ensured that our schools remain among the best in New Jersey. He wishes*

her well in her future endeavors, and he knows she will continue to be a welcome volunteer in our schools!

- Tenakill Middle School welcomed Dusti Bowling, author of *Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus*, on Thursday, November 30, 2023. Everyone at TMS read the novel as part of the One School, One Book Reading program. Ms. Bowling gave a presentation to students about her life experiences that led to her writing the novel and the process she uses to tell stories in the best way possible. She emphasized to students that excellent writing involves many edits and rewrites. She also encouraged students to put down their phones and computer screens so they can be attentive to others and experience life. He thanked the PTO for helping fund Ms. Bowling's visit to TMS.
- Hillside Elementary School presented *The First Grade Thanksgiving Concert* on Tuesday, November 21, 2023. It was a wonderful musical celebration of having a gratitude attitude! Ms. Pidi and the first-grade teachers did an outstanding job rehearsing and preparing students for their performances.
- The Tenakill Middle School will present its *Winter Concert* on Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Abbey, Ms. Riecken, and the students are preparing for a great concert! All are invited to attend.
- The Closter PTO organized a holiday boutique at both schools this week. Thank you to all the volunteers who made holiday shopping a bit easier for our students. The PTO is also conducting a holiday fundraiser through www.HomeBakedLove.com. You can find the perfect holiday treat on the website, and 20% of every purchase will go to the Closter PTO by using code 20CLOPTO when placing your order. The PTO is also selling spirit wear through their website: www.closterpto.membershiptoolkit.com. Please support our PTO – they do so much for our students!
- Closter Public Schools will have a half-day session on Friday, December 22, 2023. We will be closed for the holiday recess from December 25 – January 1, 2024. Schools will reopen on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.
- Mr. McHale extends his heartfelt wishes for a happy festival of lights to all those celebrating Hanukkah, commencing tomorrow night. To everyone in our school community, he conveys wishes for a joyous holiday season! Best wishes for a healthy and happy new year!

Following Mr. McHale's report, Dr. Puttannah was honored with a token of appreciation. In response, she expressed gratitude and thanked all the board trustees she had the privilege of working with over the past three years. Dr. Puttannah expressed pride in the board's accomplishments during her tenure and conveyed her confidence in the board's continued success in the years to come. Despite no longer being a board member, she affirmed her commitment to volunteer in the schools actively.

BOARD COMMITTEES

Ms. Kwon, the chairperson of the Finance and Physical Plant Committee, gave the report:

The Finance committee discussed the topics of post-referendum work, the bond sale that was completed, project plans to go out for bid, benefits of having a high-interest rate environment, an update on modular classrooms, the QSAC visit next week, the 2024-2025 budget, and they discussed the specifics of the audit.

Ms. Li questioned if we could use any bank for the CDs. Mr. Villanueva responded that you can only use our designated bank, Capital One. Ms. Salamea-Cross questioned if the QSAC visits were a series

of visits or just one singular visit. Mr. McHale responded that there are two visits, one for the facilities' regulations and the other for the official visit

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾ , seconded by Dr. Puttannah ▾ 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 comments portion. 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.

Mr. Tantum, Principal of Tenakill Middle School thanked Dr. Puttannah for her years of service.

Moved by Ms. Wagner ▾ , seconded by Ms. Yeoh ▾ to resume the regular order of business.

BOARD OPERATIONS

Moved by Ms. Yeoh ▾ , seconded by Dr. Puttannah ▾ to approve Motions A and B.

Ms. Fanelli raised concerns regarding item B, questioning whether these were the same students for whom we had previously voted on tuition charges. Mr. McHale clarified that these were new students identified as not domiciled in Closter, and according to New Jersey law, they must be disenrolled. Seeking further clarification, Ms. Fanelli referred to a previous situation involving students not domiciled due to incomplete home renovations and inquired about the differences. Mr. Villanueva explained that the first student does not reside in Closter. The second and third students, facing ongoing construction, were given the choice of paying tuition or disenrolling and attending the school district of their domicile. Ms. Fanelli sought confirmation that they could stay if they opted to pay tuition, to which Mr. Villanueva affirmed.

Ms. Micera then inquired about the necessity of communication with the other district for the disenrolled students. Mr. McHale clarified that communication with the other school district is not mandatory.

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

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

NAYS: None

A. APPROVAL - Minutes

Motion to approve the November 15, 2023 meeting minutes.

B. APPROVAL - Disenrollment of Students

Motion to approve the disenrollment of the following students effective December 7, 2023:

- Student # 5658738265

- Student # 9342533229
- Student # 3854482446

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

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

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

Dr. Puttannah inquired about the purpose of the field trip for the Tenakill student council. Mr. Tantom explained that the executive board is heading to the Wayne Boys and Girls Club, with parents providing transportation after school. When asked about ongoing donations, Mr. Tantom confirmed that contributions are still welcome and advised contacting Ms. Palmeri if interested in donating.

Dr. Puttannah then asked for clarification on the peer-to-peer field trip to the library. Mr. Tantom responded that this trip involves 5th and 8th graders working together, The 8th graders will provide training at the library to assist the 5th graders.

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

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

NAYS: None

A. APPROVAL - Staff Coursework

Motion to approve the following courses for 2023-2024 as recommended to the Superintendent by the Principals:

Staff Member:	Sofia Capparelli
Course No./Title:	MS Physical Education - Sport Management (Master's Program)
Institution:	The University of West Alabama (virtual)
Credits:	Master's Program

B. APPROVAL - Staff Conferences

Motion to approve the following staff conferences:

Staff Member(s):	Krystina Bisig
Conference:	Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Training
Location:	Virtual
Date:	December 14, 2023
Cost to Board:	\$0

Staff Member(s): Floro Villanueva Jr.
Conference: ASBO International Leadership Conference
Location: San Diego, CA
Date: February 8-11, 2024
Cost to Board: \$259.00 (meals & incidentals only; airfare, hotel and registration covered by NJASBO - originally approved October 11, 2023)

Staff Member(s): Keith McElroy
Conference: NJTESOL 2024 Spring Conference
Location: New Brunswick, NJ
Date: May 29-31, 2024
Cost to Board: \$457.94 (hotels, mileage, meals & incidentals; Registration paid by Title III funds - NVRHS)

Staff Member(s): Suzanne Lang & Kristen Zanin
Conference: Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) Team Training
Location: Tenakill Middle School
Date: December 14, 2023
Cost to Board: \$0 (part of the larger group attending with a total fee of \$1,522.00)

Staff Member(s): Lori Cohen
Conference: Updates in Assessment and Identification of SLD - Legal Updates on Current Topics in Special Education
Location: Forsgate Country Club, Monroe, NJ
Date: January 19, 2024
Cost to Board: \$205.68 (includes registration and mileage)

C. **APPROVAL - Field Trips**

Motion to approve the following field trips:

School: Hillside School
Group: Kindergarten
Month: May 2024
Destination: Health Barn USA
Location: Ridgewood, NJ

School: Tenakill School
Group: TMS Student Council
Month: December 2023 (After school event)
Destination: Boys and Girls Club
Location: Wayne, NJ

School: Tenakill School
 Group: Peer To Peer Group
 Month: January 2024
 Destination: Closter Public Library
 Location: Closter, NJ

FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE

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

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

Dr. Puttannah asked about item A and what things were given as donations. Mr. McHale responded that the health office supplies included things like bandages and antiseptic wipes.

Dr. Puttannah also asked about item D and what services Catapult Learning will give. Mr. McHale explained that it's part of a high-impact tutoring grant, which specified it had to be for third or fourth grade and from an approved list of vendors. Based on the responses and evaluation criteria, Catapult Learning was the best choice. Mr. Villanueva added that other vendors applied but can only offer virtual tutoring, but Catapult Learning offers in-person services.

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

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

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Donation of Supplies for the Hillside School Health Office**

Motion to approve, with appreciation, a donation of supplies for the HES Health Office totaling \$72.00. Donation is coming from Dhvani Desai.

B. **APPROVAL - Monthly Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from November 15, 2023, to November 30, 2023, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$840,037.04
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 15,056.48
Total	\$855,093.52

C. **APPROVAL - Monthly Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from December 1, 2023, to December 6th, 2023, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$242,562.51
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 8,212.57
Capital Projects (Fund 30)	\$ 1,827.00
Enterprise (Milk – Fund 60)	\$ 982.06
Total	\$253,584.14

D. **APPROVAL - Educational Services Provider**

WHEREAS, there exists a need for an Educational Services Provider for Hillside Elementary School and

WHEREAS, The Closter Board of Education authorized and issued a request for proposal to engage a firm to act as a tutoring services provider for the district and

WHEREAS, The Closter Board of Education will be utilizing the High Impact Tutoring Grant award to pay for the services and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that after consideration of the proposal received, the Board approves Catapult Learning as the educational services provider for Hillside Elementary School for a cost not to exceed \$67,680.

E. **APPROVAL - Purchase of Middlebury Interactive Licenses**

Motion to approve the purchase of Middlebury Interactive Courses license from FuelEducation (sole source) for Tenakill Middle School in the amount of \$7,000.00.

F. **APPROVAL - Investment to a Certificate of Deposit Account**

Motion to approve the investment of \$5,000,000 of the Board of Education's General Fund into a three-month certificate of deposit (CD) with Capital One Bank at a guaranteed interest rate of 4.40%.

G. **ACCEPTANCE - Fiscal Year 2023 (SY 22-23) Annual Comprehensive Financial Report**

Motion to approve the acceptance of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) and Auditor's Management Report (AMR) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, as audited by Lerch, Vinci & Bliss, LLP. The district received an unmodified opinion indicating that the financial statements audited were free from material misstatements, errors, or discrepancies.

PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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

Moved by Ms. Fanelli , seconded by Dr. Puttannah to approve Motions A - H.

Ms. Fanelli inquired about item E, wondering if the employee is being assessed every few weeks and if that's the reason for repeated extensions. Mr. McHale clarified that the employee is set to return on December 11th, and the extension ensures a period of overlap for the returning teacher to catch up and get back on track.

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

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

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Mentors for the 2023-2024 School Year**

Motion to approve the following mentors for the 2023-2024 school year for the following provisionally licensed teachers:

- Kari Corcoran to mentor Megan Weis, Kindergarten Teacher
- Amanda Cummings to mentor Carsten Kramer, Grade 5 L.A. & Social Studies Teacher
- Allison Esposito to mentor Lauren Finan, Grade 3 Teacher

B. **APPROVAL - Rachel Fineman - On-Site Internship in School Leadership**

Motion to approve Rachel Fineman to complete 300 hours of Internship in School Leadership through Montclair State University. The internship will take place at Tenakill School after contractual hours.

C. **APPROVAL - Appointment of Mayuli Copeland as Hillside School Paraprofessional**

Motion to approve the appointment of Mayuli Copeland as HES Paraprofessional for the 2023-2024 school year, at a rate of \$22.40/hour, 5.75 hours per day, effective January 2, 2024.

D. **APPROVAL – Appointment of Cristiam Orellana Jr. as Long-term Substitute Custodian**

Motion to approve the appointment of Cristiam Orellana Jr. as long-term substitute custodian on or about December 16, 2023, through March 28, 2024, five (5) hours per day, at a rate of \$20.89 per hour, pending a criminal history background check.

E. **APPROVAL - Extension of Phyllis Viole as Long-Term Leave Replacement - Grade 5**

Motion to approve the extension of Phyllis Viole as Long-Term Leave Replacement - Grade 5 Teacher (A.K.) - from November 29, 2023, to December 15, 2023.

F. **APPROVAL - Additional Leave of Absence Dates for Mary Jo Martino, Hillside Elementary School Spanish Teacher**

Motion to approve the change of dates for an anticipated leave of absence for Mary Jo Martino, HES Spanish Teacher, as follows:

- Paid sick leave (3 sick days, 3 personal, and 1 banked day) from December 6, 2023, through December 14, 2023, and
- An FMLA leave from December 15, 2023, through January 26, 2024, and
- Discretionary Leave of Absence from January 29, 2024, through March 7, 2024, with an anticipated return to work date of March 8, 2024.

G. **APPROVAL - Substitute Teachers**

Motion to approve the following substitute teachers for the 2023-2024 School Year:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Certification</u>
Veronica Greco	NJ Substitute Certification
Molly Vinson	NJ Substitute Certification
Lily Glastein	NJ Substitute Certification
Gretta Berman	NJ Substitute Certification
Shary Papparazzo	NJ Substitute Certification

H. **APPROVAL - Appointment of James Gerbig as Long-Term Substitute Teacher**

Motion to approve James Gerbig as a long-term substitute teacher to cover for Andrea Watkins from December 4, 2023, through December 22, 2023, at a rate of \$200 per day on days 1 through 10; the beginning of day 11, BA Step 0, \$54,000, prorated.

POLICY COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Ms. Fanelli; Members: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Li, Ms. Micera

Moved by Ms. Micera , seconded by Dr. Puttannah to approve Motion A.

Mr. McHale clarified that the modification to item A in the policy is due to a typographical error, and nearly every district overlooked this mistake in the policy. The change is to remove the word "shall not".

Motion was approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Yeoh, Ms. Kwon, Ms. Fanelli, Dr. Puttannah, Ms. Salamea-Cross, Ms. Micera, Ms. Li
NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - First Reading of Revised Policy #8500 - Food Service**

Motion to approve first reading of revised Policy #8500 - Food Service, as per Appendix A.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Villanueva reported the investment proceeds as required by NJ Statute and Code. On September 14, 2023, the Board of Education invested \$5 million in a 3-month Certificate of Deposit (CD) at a competitive rate of 4.4%. After the CD matures on December 14, 2023, the Board will earn a total of \$55,611.11 in interest. Following our financial practices, we reinvest the same amount in another three-month CD cycle to leverage favorable market conditions.

As part of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) process, the district is set for an official facilities check on December 14th. Both school locations will be visited. He assured the Board that the district is prepared for this process. Our facilities are well-maintained, and proactive measures have been taken to ensure they meet all relevant standards.

The bond closing occurred on November 30th, and he was pleased to announce the successful receipt of the necessary funds. Currently, we are in the process of developing bid specifications for all the projects outlined in the bond referendum.

Following Mr. Jeff Bliss's presentation tonight, he thanked the Board of Education, Closter administrators and staff, and especially the Superintendent's Office and Business Office staff for their collective efforts resulting in a clean audit. This achievement is a testament to the dedication and meticulous financial stewardship demonstrated throughout the district.

Various calendar versions were shared, aiming to accommodate responses from trustees and a few community members. The preference is for a Thursday meeting, with some flexibility for either Wednesday or Thursday. The trustees deliberated, noting concerns about availability and schedule preferences. Ms. Finkelstein suggested considering Tuesday as an option, and it was determined that Tuesday is suitable for the trustees. As a result, the meeting calendar will be arranged to accommodate a Tuesday schedule. Ms. Finkelstein requested Mr. Villanueva to inform the trustees of any potential issues or conflicts that may arise.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Moved by Ms. Finkelstein ▾ , seconded by Dr. Puttannah ▾ to open the meeting to public comments.

There were no public comments

Moved by Ms. Finkelstein ▾ , seconded by Dr. Puttannah ▾ to close the meeting to public comments.

CLOSED SESSION MOTION (If required)

Moved by Ms. Li ▾ , seconded by Dr. Puttanniah ▾ to approve the following Closed Session Motion.
Motion was approved ▾ by a voice vote of the Board:

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

NAYS: None

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

**HIB
Personnel Matters
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 8:42 PM.

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 9:33 PM.

There was a walk-in motion, item I, under **Personnel and Management Committee**

Moved by Ms. Micera , seconded by Dr. Puttannah to approve Motion I.

I. **APPROVAL - Suspension of Employee #14951065**

Motion to, in accordance with Closter Board of Education's policies and procedures, suspend employee #14951065 with pay, effective November 20, 2023, pending the outcome of an investigation.

Motion was approved by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

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

NAYS: None

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Ms. Salamea-Cross , seconded by Dr. Puttannah to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



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

POLICY GUIDE

OPERATIONS
8500/page 1 of 14
Food Services
Sep 23
Mandated

8500 FOOD SERVICES

The Board of Education shall make school lunch available to all students enrolled in a school in the district unless less than five percent of enrolled students in the school are Federally eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4. School lunches made available pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4 and this Policy shall meet minimum nutritional standards, established by the Department of Education.

Free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch, as required, shall be offered, under a school lunch program, school breakfast program, or a breakfast after the bell program, to all enrolled students who are determined to be Federally eligible for free or reduced-price meals. As provided by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4.a.(3) and N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a.a.(2), any student who is eligible for a reduced-price lunch and breakfast, pursuant to Federal income eligibility standards and criteria, shall not be required to pay for such lunch or breakfast. Free lunch or breakfast shall also be offered to each enrolled student who is Federally ineligible for free or reduced-price meals, but who has an annual household income that is not less than one hundred and eighty-six percent, and not more than one hundred ninety-nine percent, of the Federal poverty level, as determined pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1.

- A. Breakfast Program – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10; 18A:33-10.1; 18A:33-11; 18A:33-11.1; 18A:33-11.3; 18A:33-14a.

If twenty percent or more of the students enrolled in a school in the district on October 1 of the preceding school year were Federally eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program, the district shall establish a school breakfast program in the school in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10.

Notwithstanding the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10 to the contrary, if ten percent or more of the students enrolled in a school in the district on October 1 of the preceding school year were Federally eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program the district shall establish a breakfast program in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10.1.



POLICY GUIDE

If seventy percent or more of the students enrolled in a school in the district on or before the last school day before October 16 of the preceding school year were Federally eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program, the district shall establish a breakfast after the bell program pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.3.

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11, in implementing a school lunch program, pursuant to 18A:33-4 et seq., a school breakfast program, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-9 et seq., or N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10.1, or a breakfast after the bell program, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.1 or N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.3, the district shall:

1. Publicize, to parents and students, the availability of the respective school meals program, as well as the various ways in which a student may qualify to receive free or reduced price meals under the program, as provided by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4 and N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a;
2. Make every effort to ensure that subsidized students are not recognized as program participants, by the student body, faculty, or staff, in a manner that is different from the manner in which unsubsidized students are recognized as program participants. Such efforts shall include, but need not be limited to, the establishment of a neutral meal plan or voucher system that does not make a distinction between subsidized and unsubsidized students; and
3. Make every effort to:
 - a. Facilitate the prompt and accurate identification of categorically eligible students who may be certified to participate in the program, on a subsidized basis, without first submitting an application therefore, and, whenever an application is required to establish eligibility for subsidized meals, encourage students and their families to submit a subsidized school meals application for that purpose;
 - b. Facilitate and expedite, to the greatest extent practicable, the subsidized school meals application and income-eligibility determination processes that are used, by the district, to certify a student for free or reduced price school meals on



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the basis of income, and assist parents in completing the school meals application; and

- c. Encourage students who are neither categorically eligible nor income-eligible for free or reduced-price school meals to nonetheless participate, on a paid and unsubsidized basis, in the program.

If the district participates in the Federal School Breakfast Program, the district is encouraged to increase the number of students participating in the program by establishing a breakfast after-the-bell program that incorporates school breakfast into the first-period classroom or the first few minutes of the school day pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.1.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a., school breakfasts made available to students under a school breakfast program or a breakfast after the bell program shall meet minimum nutritional standards, established by the New Jersey Department of Education.

The State of New Jersey shall provide funding to each school in the district if the school operates a School Breakfast Program or a breakfast after-the-bell program, as may be necessary to reimburse the costs associated with the school's provision of free breakfasts, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a.b., to students who are Federally ineligible for free or reduced-price meals.

- B. Summer Food Service Program – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-23; 18A:33-24; 18A:33-25; 18A:33-26

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-24, if fifty percent or more of the students enrolled in the school district on or before the last school day before October 16 of the preceding school year were Federally eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program, the district shall become a sponsor or site under the Federal Summer Food Service Program or apply for a waiver pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-26.

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-23, the district shall notify each student enrolled and the student's parent of the availability of, and criteria of eligibility for, the summer meals program and the locations in the district where the summer meals are available. The district shall provide this notification by distributing flyers provided by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture pursuant to subsection N.J.S.A. 18A:33-23.c. The district may also provide electronic notice of the information through the usual



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means by which the district communicates with parents and students electronically.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-26.a., the New Jersey Department of Agriculture may grant a waiver of the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-24 et seq. To be granted a waiver, the district must show that it lacks the staff, facilities, or equipment to sponsor the Federal Summer Food Service Program, or the means to finance the hiring or acquisition of such staff, facilities, or equipment. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture also may grant a waiver for one year to the district if a different sponsor currently runs the Federal Summer Food Service Program within the district's community.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-26.b., the district shall report to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, in the manner prescribed by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, its reasons for requesting a waiver of the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-24 et seq. The report shall include, but need not be limited to, a description of the specific impediments to implementing the program and actions that could be taken to remove those impediments or, where applicable, the identification of the sponsor that currently runs the program within the same community.

C. Information Provided to Parents Regarding the National School Lunch Program and the Federal School Breakfast Program –N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1

1. At the beginning of each school year, or upon initial enrollment, in the case of a student who enrolls during the school year, the school shall provide each student's parent with:
 - a. Information on the National School Lunch Program and the Federal School Breakfast Program, including, but not limited to, information on the availability of free or reduced-price meals for eligible students, information on the application and determination processes that are used to certify eligible students for subsidized school meals, and information on the rights that are available to students and their families under N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1 and N.J.S.A.18A:33-21; and
 - b. A school meals application form, as well as instructions for completing the application, and, as necessary, assistance in completing the application.
2. The school meals information and application provided to parents, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1.a. shall:



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- a. Be communicated in a language that the parent understands;
 - b. Specify the limited purposes for which collected personal data may be used, as provided by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21b1.c.; and
 - c. Be submitted to the parent either in writing or electronically. In the latter case, the school district shall use the usual means by which it communicates with parents electronically.
3. A school meals application that is completed by a parent shall be confidential, and shall not be used or shared by the student's school or school district, except as may be necessary to:
- a. Determine whether a student identified in the application is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals;
 - b. Determine whether the school or school district is required, by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-11.3 or by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-24, to establish a breakfast after the bell program, or to participate as a sponsor or site in the Federal Summer Meals Service Program;
 - c. Ensure that the school receives appropriate reimbursement, from the State and Federal governments, for meals provided to eligible students, free of charge, through a school lunch program, a school breakfast program, a breakfast after the bell program, a summer meals program, or an emergency meals distribution program; and
 - d. Facilitate school aid determinations under the "School Funding Reform Act of 2008," N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-43 et seq.

D. Free or Reduced-Price Meals' Application Process – 7 CFR 245

School meals applications shall be reviewed in a timely manner. An eligibility determination will be made, the family will be notified of its status, and the status will be implemented as soon as possible within ten operating days of receipt of the completed application pursuant to 7 CFR 245.6(c)(6). Any student found eligible shall be offered free or reduced price meals or free milk immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility and shall continue to receive such meals during the pendency of any inquiry regarding their eligibility in accordance with the requirements of the Division of Food and Nutrition, School Nutrition Programs, New



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Jersey Department of Agriculture. Carry-over of previous year's eligibility for students shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Division of Food and Nutrition, School Nutrition Programs, New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(c)(1) and (2), eligibility for free or reduced price meals, as determined through an approved application or by direct certification, must remain in effect for the entire school year and for up to thirty operating days in the subsequent school year. Prior to the processing of an application or the completion of direct certification procedures for the current school year, children from households with approved applications or documentation of direct certification on file from the preceding year, shall be offered reimbursable free and reduced price meals, as appropriate.

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(c)(6)(iii), children from households that notify the local educational agency that they do not want free or reduced price benefits must have their benefits discontinued as soon as possible.

Pursuant to 7 CFR 245.6(c)(7), if the district receives an incomplete school meals application or a school meals application that does not meet the eligibility criteria for free or reduced-priced benefits, the school meals application must be denied. The district shall document and retain the denied school meals application and reasons for ineligibility for three years in accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(e).

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(c)(7), parents of students who are denied benefits must receive prompt, written notification of their denial. The notification may be provided by mail or e-mail to the individual who signed the school meals application. Posting the denial on the "notification" page of an online system does not meet this requirement. Likewise, informing the parent of denial via telephone does not meet this requirement. If the district uses an automated telephone information system to notify parents of denied benefits, the district must also provide the parents with written notification of the denial. The notification must provide the: reason for denial of benefits; right to appeal; instructions on how to appeal; and ability to reapply for free and reduced-price benefits at any time during the school year.

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.6(e), the district shall record the eligibility determination and notification in an easily referenced format. The record shall include the: denial date; reason for denial; date the denial notice was sent; and signature or initials of the determining official (may be electronic, where applicable).



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Any parents of students who have benefits that are to be reduced or terminated must be given ten calendar days' written notice of the change prior to the date the change will go into effect pursuant to 7 CFR 245.6a(j). The first day of the advance notice period shall be the day the notice is sent. The notice of adverse action may be sent via mail or to the e-mail address of the parent. The district **cannot** notify the household of adverse action by phone only.

Pursuant to 7 CFR 245.6a(j), the notice of adverse action must advise the parents of: change in benefits; reasons for the change; an appeal must be filed within the ten calendar days advance notice period to ensure continued benefits while awaiting a hearing and decision; instructions on how to appeal; and the parents may reapply for benefits at any time during the school year.

If the district participates in any National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, or provides free milk under the Special Milk Program, the district shall submit to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture a free and reduced-price policy statement pursuant to 7 CFR 245.10.

In accordance with 7 CFR 245.1(b), the district shall avoid any policy or practice leading to the overt identification of students receiving free or reduced-price meal benefits. Overt identification is any action that may result in a child being recognized as potentially eligible for or certified for free or reduced-price school meals. Unauthorized disclosure or overt identification of students receiving free and reduced-price meal benefits is prohibited. The district shall ensure that a child's eligibility status is not disclosed at any point in the process of providing free and reduced-price meals, including: notification of the availability of free and reduced-price benefits; certification and notification of eligibility; provision of meals in the cafeteria; and the point of service. In addition, the district shall ensure students who receive free and reduced-price benefits are not overtly identified when they are provided additional services under programs or activities available to low-income students based on their eligibility for free and reduced-price meals.

Pursuant to 7 CFR 245.2, disclosure means revealing or using individual student's program eligibility information obtained through the free and reduced-price meal or free milk eligibility process for a purpose other than the purpose for which the information was obtained. Disclosure includes, but is not limited to, access, release, or transfer of personal data about students by means of print, tape, microfilm, microfiche, electronic communication, or any other means. It includes eligibility information obtained through the school meals application or through direct certification.



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If the district accepts both cash and electronic payments, the district shall ensure students are not overtly identified through the method of payment pursuant to 7 CFR 245.8(b). To the maximum extent practicable, the district must ensure the sale of non-program foods and the method of payment for non-program foods do not inadvertently result in students being identified by their peers as receiving free and reduced-price benefits.

The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary or designee will verify applications of those eligible for free or reduced-price meals in accordance with the requirements of the Division of Food and Nutrition, School Nutrition Programs, New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

E. Meal Charge Program – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21

The Board of Education provides a meal charge program to permit unsubsidized students in the district to charge for breakfast or lunch. Collection of any payment for a meal charge program account that is in arrears shall be addressed in accordance with provisions of this Policy.

“Unsubsidized student” means a student who is neither categorically eligible nor income-eligible for free or reduced price school meals, and who is, consequently, required to pay for any such meals that are served to the student under the National School Lunch Program or the Federal School Breakfast Program.

The Board of Education recognizes a student may not have breakfast or lunch (meal), as applicable, or money to purchase a meal at school on a school day causing the student’s meal charge account to fall into arrears. The district shall contact the student’s parent to provide notice of the arrearage and shall provide the parent with a period of ten school days to pay the amount due. If the student’s parent has not made full payment by the end of the designated ten school day period, then the district shall again contact the student’s parent to provide notice of any action to be taken by the school district in response to the arrearage.

A parent who has received a second notice their child’s meal bill is in arrears and who has not made payment in full within one week from the date of the second notice may be requested to meet with the Principal or designee to discuss and resolve the matter.

A parent’s refusal to meet with the Principal or designee or take other steps to resolve the matter may be indicative of more serious issues in the family or household. However, when a parent’s routine failure to provide breakfast or lunch is reasonably suspected to be indicative of child neglect, the Principal or designee shall immediately report such suspicion to the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency as required



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in N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10. Such reporting shall not be delayed to accommodate a parent's meeting with the Principal or designee.

A school district shall report at least biannually to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture the number of students who are denied school breakfast or school lunch in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21.a.(2) and this Policy.

Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21 or this Policy shall be construed to require the district to deny or restrict the ability of an unsubsidized student to access school breakfast or school lunch when the student's school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears.

The school or school district shall not:

1. Publicly identify or stigmatize an unsubsidized student who cannot pay for a school breakfast or a school lunch or whose school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears. (For example, by requiring the student to sit at a separate table or by requiring that the student wear a wristband, hand stamp, or identifying mark, or by serving the student an alternative meal);
2. Require an unsubsidized student, who cannot pay for a school breakfast or a school lunch or whose school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears to do chores or other work to pay for the school breakfast or school lunch;
3. Require an unsubsidized student to discard a school breakfast or school lunch after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for a school breakfast or school lunch or because money is owed for previously provided meals;
4. Prohibit an unsubsidized student, or sibling of such a student, from attending or participating in non-fee-based extracurricular activities, field trips, or school events, from receiving grades, official transcripts, or report cards, or from graduating or attending graduation events, solely because of the student's unresolved meal debt; or
5. Require the parent of an unsubsidized student to pay fees or costs in excess of the actual amounts owed for meals previously served to the student.



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If an unsubsidized student owes money for the equivalent of five or more school meals, the Principal or designee shall:

1. Determine whether the student is categorically eligible or income-eligible for free or reduced price meals, by conducting a review of all available records related to the student, and by making at least two attempts, not including the initial attempt made pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21.c.(2), to contact the student's parent and have the parent fill out a school meals application; and
2. Contact the parent of the unsubsidized student to offer assistance with respect to the completion of the school meals application; and to determine if there are other issues in the household that have caused the student to have insufficient funds to purchase a school breakfast or school lunch; and to offer any other appropriate assistance.

The school district shall direct communications about a student's school breakfast or school lunch bill being in arrears to the parent and not to the student. Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21 shall prohibit the school district from sending a student home with a letter addressed to a parent.

Notwithstanding the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21 and the provisions of any other law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, an unsubsidized student shall not be denied access to a school meal, regardless of the student's ability to pay or the status of the student's meal arrearages, during any period of time in which the school is making a determination, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21.c., as to whether the student is eligible for, and can be certified to receive, free or reduced price meals.

If the student's meal bill is in arrears, but the student has the money to purchase a meal on a subsequent school day, the student will be provided a meal with payment and the food service program will not use the student's payment to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that school day's meal.

Students receiving free meals will not be denied a meal even if they accrued a negative balance from other purchases in the cafeteria.

The school district may post this Policy on the school district's website provided there is a method in place to ensure this Policy reaches all households without access to a computer or the Internet.]

F. Provision of Meals to Homeless Children – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21c.



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The district's liaison for the education of homeless children shall coordinate with district personnel to ensure that a homeless student receives free school meals and is monitored according to district policies pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-21c.

G. Provision of School Meals During Period of School Closure – N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2

In the event the Board is provided a written directive, by either the New Jersey Department of Health or the health officer of the jurisdiction, to institute a public health-related closure due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the district shall implement a program, during the period of the school closure, to provide school meals, at meal distribution sites designated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2.b., to all students enrolled in the district who are either categorically eligible or income-eligible for free or reduced price school meals.

In the event of an emergency closure, as described in N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2.a., the district shall identify one or more school meal distribution sites that are walkable and easily accessible to students in the district. The district shall collaborate with county and municipal government officials in identifying appropriate sites. A school meals distribution site may include, but need not be limited to: faith-based locations; community centers, such as YMCAs; and locations in the district where meals are made available through a summer meals program. In a district that includes high density housing, the district shall make every effort to identify a school meal distribution site in that housing area.

The district shall identify students enrolled in the district who are categorically eligible or income-eligible for free or reduced price meals, and for whom a school meal distribution site, identified pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2.b., is not within walking distance. In the case of these students, the district shall distribute the school meals to the student's residence or to the student's bus stop along an established bus route, provided that the student or the student's parent is present at the bus stop for the distribution. Food distributed pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2.c. may include up to a total of three school days' worth of food per delivery.

The district may use school buses owned and operated by the district to distribute school meals pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2. If the district does not own and operate its own buses, the district may contract for the distribution of school meals, and these contracts shall not be subject to the



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public bidding requirements established pursuant to the “Public School Contracts Law,” N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-1 et seq.

The district shall collaborate, as feasible, with other districts and with local government units to implement the emergency meals distribution program, as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2, in order to promote administrative and operational efficiencies and cost savings.

School lunches and breakfasts that are made available, through an emergency meals distribution program operating pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:33-27.2, shall be provided to eligible students, free of charge, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4.a. and N.J.S.A. 18A:33-14a.

H. Statement of Compliance

All food service programs shall be operated pursuant to 7 CFR 245, as appropriate, and this Policy.

Adopted:

