



# Board of Education COMMITTEE REPORT

December 8, 2022

## Culture, Climate, Community Relations

**The Culture, Climate, and Community Relations Committee met on November 15 to discuss positive messaging, community partnerships, and wellness services.**

### Positive Messaging

- The committee discussed displays on our school marquee highlighting themes such as Piscataway Pride, Hispanic Heritage Month, Week of Respect, and National Gratitude Month.
- The administration is in the process of developing model scripts to share with Piscataway High School students for student-to-student mentoring. Videos will be shared with the committee.
- The district's marketing brochure was presented with updates, include the district's selection among Best School Districts in NJ, a QR code, and interactive hyperlinks. The brochure was shared with five local Realtors, and will continue to be shared with the community.

### Community Partnerships

- Mrs. Pongratz presented information about connections with Rutgers University:
  - Business School professor Dr. Kwame Adu-Gymfi met with business classes about opportunities in finance.
  - Members of the Rutgers Minority Engineering Educational Task (MEET) visited Arbor School to support Rutgers Spirit Day.
  - Rutgers Future Scholar advisors visited Schor Middle School to lead team-building exercises.
- Mr. Miller reported on re-establishing our relationship with Jersey Cares since he has taken over as our Public Information Officer. Together, they are planning a virtual workshop in Diversity in STEM for PHS students in January. Jersey Cares says more opportunities to collaborate will likely be available in the spring.

### Wellness Services

- Mrs. Pongratz shared background on delayed school start times. The administration is recommending issuing a new survey to school community members.
- A parent workshop is being created by Dr. Connolly and the Haven counselors for our families. It will be presented during the week of January 16, 2023.

## Policy and Legislative

**The Policy and Legislative Committee met on Thursday, December 1 to discuss policies regarding sexual harassment of students; political activity by staff; uses of cannabis by staff; and more.**

- The Committee approved proposed Regulation 5751, "Sexual Harassment of Students," to move forward to the Board. Corresponding Policy 5751 was adopted by the Board earlier this year to reflect the U.S. Department of Education's August 2020 rule for preventing, investigating, and remediating student-to-student sexual harassment. The accompanying Regulation stipulates detailed policies and procedures for reporting and investigating allegations.
- The Committee approved proposed revisions to Policy 3233, "Political Activities and Other Staff Expression," to move forward to the Board. The revisions focus on proposed language limiting staff members' ability to express personal views when in contact with students during the performance of their duties. Mr. Rubin explained that the Policy explicitly incorporates court rulings setting the outer limits of staff members' free speech rights, which would be respected.
- Mr. Rubin shared with the Committee a memo prepared by Strauss Esmay explaining challenges school districts face with respect to the legalization of cannabis use by adults. It still remains illegal for students, but the District must respect the right of staff members to use cannabis on their own time, provided they do not come to work impaired. Mr. Rubin explained that a significant challenge for employers is uncertainty over what constitutes sufficient impairment to remove a staff member from the workplace.
- Mr. Rubin updated the Committee on Senate Bill 2426, signed into law on November 30, requiring school districts to provide digital maps of school facilities to local law enforcement; and Senate Bill 588, awaiting action by Governor Murphy, which would require the State Board of Education to adopt Student Learning Standards for "information literacy."

## Curriculum

**The Curriculum Committee met on December 5 to discuss grading, PHS academy applications, parent workshops, a review of the curriculum guide, and more.**

**Grading:** A grading committee was created at Piscataway High School seeking consistency across grade level bands. The committee is examining weights within departments and procedures for late work. Mr. Baldassano said procedures for late work will be in the student handbook for the 2023 school year. Dr. Baskerville said departments are developing a plan for a minimum number of assignments.

**PHS Academies:** There are currently 181 applications for PHS Academies. Entrance assessments were given on December 1. Portfolio assessments and auditions will be on January 7. Decisions will be made and communicated by February 3.

**Comprehensive Health and PE:** A draft form is being constructed in Genesis for opting out of a specific lesson in the state comprehensive health and physical education. The process will be communicated to parents in February or March.

**Parent/Community Workshops:** Three parent nights will take place beginning with the elementary schools on January 19. Nights for the intermediate and middle schools will be scheduled. These events will be held at PHS from 6 to 8 p.m. and will cover Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies and Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

**Author Visits:** Stephanie Dunlap will tour the four elementary schools and will do a brief author visit and sign the copy of her book "Leola Bakes" that will be placed in each media center. Copies have been made available for all Grade 1 classrooms.

**NJSLA:** Robert Frey described the NJSLA question types and how it is administered. An example of an evidence statement analysis was shown to explain how the information can be used to evaluate curriculum and drive instruction.

### Curriculum Guide Review

**Instructional Technology:** Classes will move away from a full-year course to a semester course to generate more interest in other TV courses.

**Mathematics:** AP Precalculus and Financial Applications of Algebra 2 are going to be offered for next school year. That will allow more students a chance to have an AP experience. Financial Applications of Algebra 2 will allow typical essential-level students with more engaging course work.

**Science:** Dr. Baskerville presented for Ms. Pritchard on the addition of AP Physics 1, which is an algebra-based physics course providing an excellent opportunity for preparation for college majors, including pre-med programs, and can be a first year physics course for some students, allowing them the opportunity to take even more AP courses as juniors and seniors.

He also explained the name change of an elective from "Human Anatomy and Physiology" to "Anatomy of the Human Body." This name change highlights this course as a survey of the systems of the human body, and differentiates between this course and the Rutgers dual-enrollment Anatomy 1 course.

**Social Studies:** Mr. Knox presented a Justice and Human Rights proposal for the Social Studies Department. Mr. Knox also introduced a new debate course for the 2023-24 school year.

**Language Arts:** Mr. Hood proposed a Contemporary Poetry and Performance class. It is a way to increase student choice to offer a new course and build on successes in performance. This need arose because of a lack of poetry courses at PHS.

**World Language/ESL:** There will be two new courses for middle school students. The MS classes will be split to Level 1-2 and 3+. We will also go up to Level 4 American Sign Language at the high school. The department will try to incorporate ASL into presentations at future events.

**Visual and Performing Arts:** Ms. Sterlacci is looking to add an AP Art History course at the high school. Students will learn to analyze and interpret art in a critical way. The middle school VPA curriculum will be updated with an appendix to offer one section of eighth-grade accelerated art.

## Fiscal Planning and Operations

**The Fiscal Planning and Operations Committee met on December 7 to discuss the 2021-22 audit, the 2023-24 budget, capital projects, and more.**

### **2021-2022 Audit**

- The audit is complete pending final documentation needed for the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). Mr. Oliveira informed the Committee that the NJ DOE extended the deadline for submitting the Audit Summary Application and ACFR to January 5, 2023, and February 6, 2023, respectively.
- The Committee discussed the expected surplus from the 2021-2022 audit and potential allocations to Maintenance Reserve, Current Expense Emergency Reserve, and Capital Reserve, with the remainder applied to the 2023-2024 budget.

### **2023-2024 Budget**

- School and department budget submissions were made on Friday, December 2. Meetings will be scheduled to review them over the next two months.
- Salaries and benefits are being reviewed for an early rollover into the budget.

### **Facility Capital Projects**

- HVAC Upgrades #1 – All units are on-site, but installation in the classrooms cannot proceed while school is in session. Installation began in the media centers, but an issue with electrical wiring was encountered.
- HVAC Upgrades #2 – Bid opening occurred on December 1. Pricing was significantly overbudget. Administration is recommending the rejection of all bids at the December 8 Board meeting. A decision on rebidding or postponing will be made in 2023.
- 5-Year Capital Project Plan – Mr. Oliveira updated the Committee on the prioritization of potential projects, with non-essential projects being dropped from consideration. The Committee will review recommendations at a future meeting.

### **Energy Savings Improvement Program (ESIP) Update**

- Solar PPA – Arbor, Eisenhower, and King all passed inspection and are waiting for permission to operate (PTO). Administration is assessing the implications of continuing or abandoning the Quibbletown solar proposal.
- Honeywell Projects – Siemens continues to tie in HVAC units to the new software system. Several RTUs were installed at Eisenhower. Work on the boilers, de-stratification fans, and transformers is ongoing. Review of the water conservation measures identified deficiencies that are being addressed. Measurement work was completed for the PHS window replacement project.

### **New Jersey School Business Legislative Update**

- Dr. Connors discussed S2426, the school mapping bill. Mr. Oliveira noted that the District completed its maps and is working with the Piscataway Police Department to implement a usage protocol.
- Dr. Connors noted legislative discussions regarding universal school meals.

### **Business Office Update**

- DEI Equity Audit – A committee of five administrators completed the review of proposals submitted for an equity audit.