

PRESIDENT’S REPORT
8/26/20
GLASSBORO BOARD OF EDUCATION

INSTRUCTION	OPERATIONS	ADMINISTRATION
Elizabeth Volz – Chair	Chris Esgro – Chair	June Longley – Chair
Ray Cibo	Michele Ricci	Ben Stephens
Ryan Hughes	Ray Cibo	Stacie Tattersdill

PUBLIC NOTICE OF MEETING OR WORK SESSION

Public notice of this meeting or work session has been made in accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Law of 1975.

Advanced public notice of this meeting was given January 8, 2020 (As amended on 3/16/20). Notice including the time, date and place of the meeting.

Said public notice has been made as follows:

Notice has been posted in the Board of Education Office, Carpenter Street and Bowe Boulevard, Glassboro, NJ and **on our website for the webinar link.**

Notice has been communicated to the following newspapers:

- a. South Jersey Times
- b. Courier Post

Notice has been filed with the Clerk of the Borough of Glassboro

Flag Salute

General

Good evening and thank you for your participation. During tonight’s meeting, the board of education will be considering a resolution amending the Employment Contract of the Superintendent to extend the current agreement for a period of 3 years. We will also be considering the recommendation of the Superintendent to hire Dr. Preston, who has been serving as the acting chief academic officer over the past few months, to fill the role permanently. The board will also be considering the recommendation of the superintendent to reopen schools with a solely virtual schedule on September 8, as was announced in his letter of August 20, 2020.

His announcement, encouraged by the board to begin preparations, resulted in numerous phone calls, emails, and letters of support and thanks from many parents, faculty, and community members. We have also fielded some negative feedback from angry and frustrated parents, calling for the firing of teachers who refuse to report, demands for reductions in property taxes, and claims for payment of costs associated with virtual learning.

I applaud the efforts of instructional staff who are going above and beyond to support teaching and learning during this difficult time. In fact, many are working now, while not contracted to do so,

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to prepare for the upcoming school year. Also, many teachers, like parents, have their own children to support through virtual learning, and while they have options under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, chose to continue supporting teaching and learning.

If life has taught us anything, there is no avoiding death and taxes. Property taxpayers in New Jersey contribute to a combination of municipal, county, and school budgets, whether those services are used or not. Those parents seeking a reduction in their taxes due to distance learning should get in the long line behind senior citizens, businesses, empty nesters, and the childless, who are paying the same proportionate tax but getting no direct benefit. However, any savings related to the reduction in services are returned to the taxpayers. In fact, the district applied \$6.5 million in budgeted fund balance from prior year savings in support of the 2020-2021 budget, resulting in no tax increase within the borough over the past 3 years.

In making our decision to support full virtual learning, the board of education must ensure we are 1) doing everything possible to protect the health and safety of students, staff, and the community at large, and 2) ensure we are providing a constitutionally mandated thorough and efficient education.

It is important to understand the developments that have brought us to the current recommendation to open virtually. Like all school districts across the state, we are mandated to comply with federal, state, and local guidelines.

As you may recall, On March 16, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 104, calling for schools to halt in-person instruction to protect the State from the spread of COVID-19. With a few days' notice we proceeded to implement the start of virtual learning.

On June 27, 2020, Governor Murphy and Commissioner of Education Lamont Repollet released the state's school reopening plan. The plan required each district to develop, in collaboration with community stakeholders, a plan to reopen schools in the Fall that best fits the district's local needs.

The plan detailed a number of anticipated minimum standards, including but not limited to mandated in-person instruction, social distancing in schools and on buses, requirements to wear face coverings, adoption of cleaning/disinfecting procedures, adoption of policy for screening students and employees upon arrival, and related controls for indoor air quality.

The district held building level focus groups via virtual meetings to discuss recommended approaches, scheduled and conducted special public board meetings to gain feedback and communicate direction. Then on Jul 25, 2020 the governor announcing new guidelines for students to opt for virtual learning in the upcoming school year. The administration surveyed parents and determined more than 50% would opt for virtual learning. On July 29, 2020, the board adopted the Hybrid approach, shared the use of Schoology and SeeSaw learning management systems, and provided an overview of the process.

Then, on August 12, 2020 Governor Murphy signed an executive order (175) giving districts the option to offer all-virtual classes. The executive order mandated each chief school administrator

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attest to meeting the health and safety standards, delineated in the Department of Education's "Checklist for Re-Opening of School 2020-2021.

In response to COVID, the state withdrew its approval of emergency aid funding for the 2020-2021 school year, thereby reducing \$1.4 million in available funds. While CARES Act funding helped to supplement some of the shortfall, the districts confidence in having initial PPE and related health and safety requirements met are high, but not certain, nor is the district's ability to replenish needed supplies, materials, and services.

To meet our goal of protecting the health and safety of students and ensuring a thorough and efficient education, we support the recommendation the superintendent to start the school year virtually. The benefits include, but are not limited to:

- Assures the safety and health of students, staff, and the reduced potential for COVID transmission within the community.
- Expands teacher/student direct instructional time from an average of 8 hours per week to over 20 hours per week.
- Enables additional time and resources necessary to ensure we are meeting the state's health and safety standards.
- Allows for parents to exercise options afforded under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to assist their children during virtual learning.
- Enables the expansion of childcare support so deeply scarce in the Glassboro community and enables Glassboro Child Development Center to apply for and secure grant funds to support low income families.
- Enables the district to apply for the Digital Divide Discretionary Grant that help provide access to Wi-Fi hotspots for district families that are in need.
- Mitigates the potential loss of certificated staff due to vulnerabilities and the effect on instructional consistency.

I do not think there is one person participating in this meeting who does not desire a return to "normal" and the full reopening of schools. However, during these uncertain times, the rewards of starting virtual far outweigh the risks, particularly when the risk is borne mostly by students, staff, families, and the entire Glassboro Community.

Tonight, we will hear more about the manner in which the Glassboro Virtual Academy will provide for a safe, healthy, thorough, and efficient education. We will also hear a presentation from the department of special services who will provide their annual report and methods to continue providing supports through virtual learning.

We will open public comment for items on the agenda and the revised reopening plan

We will have a separate hearing and public comment period for the CSA's Contract.

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Meetings

Board Committee Reports/Action Items

1. Instruction (Ms. Volz, Chair)

F.1. New Teacher Academy – Provide a brief overview.

2. Operations (Mr. Esgro, Chair)

3. Administration (Ms. Longley, Chair)

Old Business

- Citizens Advisory Committee for the Bond Referenda is placed on hold until further notice. No action will be taken until the committee meets again to vet the recommendations for updated projects.

New Business

The NJSBA is urging our members to contact their State Senator and respectfully urge him or her to vote “NO” on [Senate Bill No. 2843](#), which constitutes an unnecessary and inappropriate overreach into a board of education’s duty to make prompt and responsive personnel decisions that are in the best interest of the community. The New Jersey State Senate is scheduled to hold a floor vote on S-2843 this **Thursday, August 27**. Specifically, S-2843 does the following:

- Grants three-year employment contracts to all high school varsity coaches. All assistant coaches would be given two-year contracts.
- Directs a school district official to provide a written notice of the basis for the dismissal of a coach or within five days after the decision is made by the official but prior to any action being taken by the board of education, further provides that any coach dismissed based on a poor annual evaluation must be provided one year in which to correct and overcome any identified deficiencies.
- Authorizes a dismissed coach to request a hearing before the board of education after receiving the written notice of the basis for the dismissal. Such coach would also be entitled to representation by counsel, to present witnesses, and to ask questions and cross examine any of the district officials who participated in making the termination decision.

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The hearing would take place in executive session with a court reporter (paid for by the district) present.

- Permits a board of education's decision to dismiss a coach to be appealed to the Commissioner of Education.

The New Jersey School Boards Association strongly **OPPOSES** this legislation, as do three major statewide organizations representing district and building-level administrators. While the NJSBA appreciates the intent behind the bill to provide stability and protection from arbitrary dismissal, that objective must be balanced with a board of education's responsibility to make personnel decisions based on educational needs, financial capacity and operational considerations.